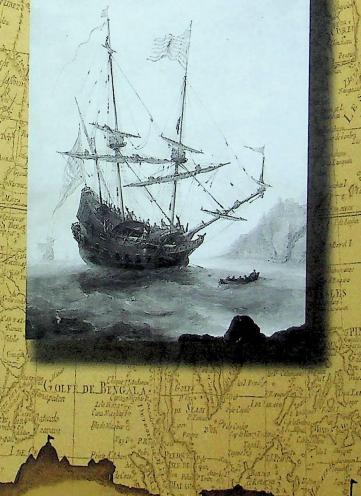


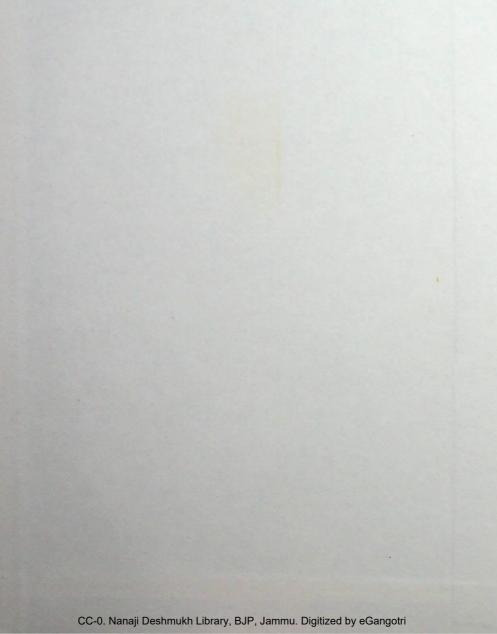
# Christianity

With a focus on India



Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan

CC-0. Nanaji Deshmukh Library, BJP, Jammu. Digitized by eGangotri



## A27R6



# EXPRESSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY WITH A FOCUS ON INDIA

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA PRAKASHAN TRUST 5, Singarachari Street, Triplicane Chennai – 600 005 (Tamil Nadu) India Phone: 91-44-28440042

Email: vkpt@vkendra.org
Website: www.vkendra.org

© Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan Trust, Chennai, 2007, for the introduction, all editorial notes, and all boxed articles. Copyright of papers remains with their respective authors.

This book edited by the Vivekananda Kendra editorial team under the guidance and direction of P. Parameswaran. The publisher is a sister organization of the Vivekananda Kendra, an all-India service mission with "service to humanity" as its sole motto. This publication is based on the same non-profit spirit, and any proceeds from its sales will be wholly used towards the Kendra's charitable objectives.

First edition
Printed at Nagaraj & Co., Chennai, India, 2007



# Invocation



त्रयी साङ्ख्यं योगः पशुपतिमतं वैष्णविमिति प्रिभिन्ने प्रस्थाने परिमदमदः पथ्यमिति च। रुचीनां वैचित्र्यादजुकुटिलनानापथजुषां नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमिस पयसामर्णव इव॥

Different are the paths laid down in the Vedas, Sankhya, Yoga, and Shaiva and Vaishnava scriptures. Of these, some people take to one and some to another as the best. Devotees follow these diverse paths, straight or crooked, according to their different tendencies. Yet, O Lord, Thou alone art the ultimate goal of all men, as the ocean is of all rivers.

- Siyamahimnah Stotra, 7

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथेव भजाम्यहम्। मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.

— Bhagavad Gita, 4.11





## CONTENTS\*

Introduction Editorial Note	9 17
Part 1 – Origins and Early History of Christianity	
Christianity, a Man-Made Religion Indebted to India by Koenraad Elst	21 47 52
A Hindu Community in Ancient Armenia  A Disaster in the History of Mankind: interview of	63
Swami Devananda by Rajeev Srinivasan  Part 2 – Expressions of	65
Christianity in the West	
Woman in Christianity by Michel Danino The Holy Inquisition	83 98
	104
1450-1750 CE, by Helen Ellerbe	109
Christianity in America  Destruction of the Indies	124
by Bartolemé de Las Casas	128
by Bartolemé de Las Casas	136
Swami Vivekananda on the spread of Christianity	138

<sup>\*</sup> The titles of editorial items and boxed articles are italicized.

Huge 1,500-year-old pyramid discovered in Mexico Children of One Creator	139
by Alejandro Cirilo Perez Oxlaj	141
A Drum and a Dream: The Suppression of African Spirituality during Slavery in the U.S.	
by Dorothy Randall Gray	144
Impact of Christianity on Ancient Traditions and	
African Indigenous Religion	
by Chief Nana Apeadu	150
From the Holy Cross to the Holocaust	
by Kalavai Venkat	153
A "just and splendid" slaughter	159
Soon, a Fascist Saint	191
Thoughts from Simon Wiesenthal	196
Part 3 – Expressions of Christianity	7
in India and elsewhere in Asia	
III IIIdid diid else // 1202	
Christian Missions in Asia	
by K. M. Panikkar	209
Thus Spake Francis Xavier	235
Kerala, the Gateway to Indian Christianity	220
by Dr. C. I. Issac	239
Antecedents of the Goa Inquisition	279
by Radha Rajan	288
The Destruction of Hindu Culture in Goa	200
Pouncing on Goa	293
DV ATTECO DE METO	230
"Behold Another Victim of the Holy Inquisition"	310
by Rev. Dr. Claudius Buchanan	010
Repression of Buddhism in Sri Lanka by	
the Portuguese (1505-1658)	319
IIV SELIARA VVCCI di dilia il	
Puducherry's Vedapuriswaran Temple by Sita Ram Goel	. 349
DY SITO ROM LONG	

by Abbé J. A. Bubois  Demonizing India  Education in India: Destruction and Change under missionary and colonial influence by Nivedita Raghunath Bhide  Christian Indology	358 379 383 398
Part 4 – Intellectual Challenges to Christianity	
Voltaire (1694-1778)	405
The Questions of Zapata by Voltaire Heretics And Heresies	408
by Robert G. Ingersoll	419
by Bertrand Russell	443
A "Godless Orthodoxy"	453
Western Thinkers on Christianity Theo-Diversity and Humane Values	455
by Prof. Lokesh Chandra	481
Part 5 – The decline of Christianity	
Swami Vivekananda: Christianity vs. Science	494
Christianity and Science	495
Canada's Residential Schools	503
Australia's Stolen Generation	532
"Kill the Indian, save the man"	560
A Saga of Scandals	565
An Open Letter to the Pope  The Retreat of Christianity in the West	572
Epilogue	599

### INTRODUCTION

This volume presents a few aspects and dimensions of Christianity, in particular Indian Christianity. It will soon have a companion volume, Christianity: Proselytism and Conversion, with a focus in India. The contributors to these two volumes were selected on the basis of their authentic study of the concerned aspects; there are also articles by authors who have a deep insight into the concerned areas as a result of their encounter with Christianity in actual practice. This volume is meant not only for the specialist intellectual but also for the ordinary man who is interested in knowing about Christianity, which is increasingly confronting him in his everyday life. In short, it gives an academic understanding of the subject of Christianity in India and also helps as a guideline to deal with the Christian experience in an objective manner, keeping the widest interest of the country as a whole.

The Vivekananda Kendra felt it necessary to bring out this volume on Christianity not because there is any dearth of literature on this subject in our libraries. On the contrary, such material is abundant at the present juncture. But it has been written by authors who are keen to present Christianity from a particular angle and with a particular motive. There are writings by self-confessed missionaries, by acknowledged supporters of Christian imperialism and there are also writings from self-appointed secularists. Even so-called objective historians have been hesitant to come out openly and call a spade a spade. Their hesitation is mostly due to the fear of organized, hostile criticism which will not only adversely affect the book market but also make them vulnerable to charges of being communal. Unpleasant truths are very often played down or distorted, if not totally suppressed. The total outcome of all these is that an Indian student of Christianity finds it difficult to get the truth which is reliable and useful.

One justification for bringing out this volume is that a lot of misunderstanding has been created by interested missionary writers and Christian propagandists about the origin of Christianity in India and also about the methods Christian missionaries have used to propagate their religion in this country. One example may be cited here. It is widely propagated through writings which claim to be authentic that Christians came to India in the first century AD through St. Thomas, one of the twelve direct disciples of Jesus Christ. It is openly propagated through a wide range of historical and other writings, powerfully backed by oral traditions and pastoral teachings that St. Thomas landed in Chowghat near Guruvayur in Kerala in AD 52. They go on to say that St. Thomas converted the Namboodiri Brahmins who were engaged in the worship of God in the Palayoor Shiva temple, by showing miracles. That was, according to them, the beginning of Christianity in Kerala. Based on this theory they trace back the history of Christianity in Kerala to nearly 2000 year ago, a statement which has no historical backing whatsoever. Despite the fact that there is no credible historical evidence to uphold this theory, as a result of organized massive propaganda by the clergy over a long period of time, there is a general belief that the advent of St. Thomas in the first century AD and his success in converting Namboodiris who form the highest strata of Hindu society is a fact of history. Even historians have been so overawed by the massive propaganda that they prefer to keep silent rather than court unpopularity. Even authentic historic documents which at one time widely disputed this claim are not currently in vogue. Textbooks also have been so fabricated that the myth is treated as real history.

But, of late, there has been a funny twist to the whole episode. Some "eminent" clergymen and intellectuals of their persuasion have floated a new theory. According to them, Hinduism came to Kerala centuries after Christianity had its origin in the first century AD. They argue that Namboodiris came and settled down in Kerala during the sixth or the

seventh century AD as part of the Aryan colonization, whereas by that time Christianity had a flourishing history in Kerala for about six centuries. So, from the point of antiquity, Christianity is anterior to Hinduism by many centuries.

What is really interesting is that neither theory has any historical evidence to support it. It is all a matter of weighing the comparative advantage and disadvantage of the two theories to the spread as well as status of Christianity in Kerala. Whether the claim of high-class Namboodiris to have been the first converts to Christianity is more prestigious or the antiquity of Christianity over Hinduism is more prestigious is the crucial issue. History and truth are the casualties. Behind the smokescreen of these conflicting theories, mythology has been elevated to history.

Along with this, another parallel mythology of St. Thomas having been murdered by the Brahmins of Tamil Nadu and the origin of St. Thome church on the St. Thomas mount in Chennai where his martyrdom is supposed have taken place is propagated in such a planned and persistent manner that a large number of people blindly believe it.

There has been another cunning and calculated move by persons placed in the high rungs of clerical hierarchy to manipulate evidence and contrive to establish the antiquity of Christianity in Tamil Nadu. The Church has made a really ingenious attempt to prove to the world that the great Tamil Saint Tiruvalluvar was a Christian missionary and Tirukkural a Christian scripture. A Brahmin linguist was hired to manipulate evidences and distort factual materials for this purpose. Huge sums of money passed hands and theories were cooked up; both the scheming Bishop Arulappa and the greedy Brahmin even visited Rome to place the manufactured discovery before the Pope for his approval. Later, the whole dishonest endeavour went awry; that is a different matter. But the entire history of this shameless transaction has been widely published. Many such unholy attempts have been brought to light, which shows how highly placed clerical personalities have unscrupulously tried to fabricate history for spreading Christianity in a systematic manner.

The bogus claim of the Christian antiquity dating from the time of Saint Thomas's mythical arrival in Kerala stands exposed by an irrefutable historical fact. No Christian literature either in Malayalam, Tamil or Sanskrit is available till the late eighteenth century, which is proof enough to reject totally any Christian impact on Kerala's literary field. Had Namboodiris been converted in the first century as the claim goes, there would have been no dearth of Christian literature written by them right from that time. They were great scholars and prolific writers on religious and cultural subjects at all times. There would have been at least some literature dealing with Christianity, just as there are abundant literary works about Vaishnava, Shaiva, and Tantric religious subjects.

The total absence of any such Christian literature even during the medieval Bhakti period, when there was a flourishing crop of Malayalam literature like Ramayana, Mahabharata and Sri Mahabhagavata, conclusively proves that whatever Christianity existed in Kerala at that time was only on the margins of social life with hardly any recognition from the mainstream and without any worthy contribution from their side. This deafening silence cannot be compensated by flimsy claims put out as a result of after thought.

Ordained priests have abandoned their Christian names and adopted respected names of Hindu sannyasins only to confuse Hindus in order to canvass their support for the missionary activities. Some even put on saffron clothes and made open claims to the effect that they had been initiated into sannyasa by the President of the Sri Ramakrishna mission in strict Hindu tradition. When officially exposed, they tried to wriggle out by means of dishonest excuses but still clung on to their dubious ways.

Another claim that they parade in order to win acceptability among the Hindus is that Christianity is a religion of love and compassion and that their main channel of activity is

service of the poor and the deprived. But the true history of Christianity all over the world, including India, shows, beyond a shadow of doubt, that missionaries have indulged in cruelty and violence for spreading their religion. The Goan inquisition is well documented and no one can deny or disprove it. The destruction of temples has also been recorded. Francis Xavier who was declared a saint has a history of the most cruel sort of violence used for spreading Christianity in the coastal areas of India. Letters written by Francis Xavier himself to the king of Portugal have been published wherein he publicly declared, "I have no words to express the joy which I felt at seeing a number of temples destroyed by their erstwhile worshippers after they were converted to Christianity." Till a few years ago, at the St. Thomas Church of Palayoor (near Guruvayur in Trichur district), there was a large board publicly displayed which said, "Here once stood a Shiva temple. St. Thomas after converting Namboodiri Brahmins, turned the temple into a church. Later on, the temple was pulled down and the present church was built over it." This is probably the earliest public admission of St. Thomas Christians pulling down an established Hindu temple in order to build a church. This is not an isolated incident.

It was not only the poor and the neglected or the outcaste and untouchables of Hindu society whom the missionaries targeted for conversion, though that was their loudly proclaimed objective. They had another strategy of selectively approaching important personalities who wield great influence over the society by their moral and spiritual stature and leadership qualities. They made persistent efforts to establish contacts and slowly win over such persons to Christianity. Sri Narayana Guru, the saint and reformer of Kerala was one such with whom they engaged in a religious dialogue. Similarly, they made serious efforts to appeal to Mahatma Gandhi's religious sympathy and admiration for the teachings of Christ. Needless to say that their efforts had no impact whatsoever on these stalwarts. But what is significant is that such silly

efforts were made with the firm conviction that these great souls are doomed to eternal hell if they do not get baptized and that it was their bounden Christian duty to save them.

The outcaste and the untouchable were en masse converted under the pretext that they were inhumanly treated by the upper caste Hindus and their salvation here and hereafter would be assured if they became Christians. That was the carrot dangled before them. But it was only a ploy. The converted Dalits remained in the same plight with all their social and economic disabilities unrelieved. Even separate churches and separate sitting arrangements were provided for them, and equal social status — intermarriage and interdining, for instance — was denied. Even today, these deplorable conditions continue to prevail except nominally. The disillusioned Dalits clamour for better treatment. What the Church does is to bring pressure on the Government to give them special reservations and all other benefits to which the Hindu Dalits are constitutionally entitled. The hypocrisy and double standard are obvious.

Whatever has been stated above by way of explanation for selecting the subject of Christianity for this volume should be taken in the proper perspective. It is at all not meant to condemn or even belittle the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ whom Swami Vivekananda as also the Hindu society in general hold in a very high esteem. Christ's claim to greatness is unquestionable. The light he shed through his simple words and equally simple life is on a par with that of other great incarnations of the world. Swamiji called him "Messenger of God." But unfortunately, the Church did not do justice to his divine greatness. The universal personality of Christ was cribbed, cabined and confined within the narrow walls of a rigorously dogmatic and strictly regimented body of the Church. Even great Christian scholars have confessed that the history of the Church is largely a negation and distortion of Christ's teachings. That is why Swami Abhedananda, a prominent co-disciple of Swami Vivekananda delivered a

lecture in America on "Why a Hindu accepts Christ and rejects Churchianity."

One radical difference between the Hindu and the Christian veneration for Christ is worth keeping in mind when we think of the role of Christ and his message in the Indian context. This has been beautifully brought out by the late revered Swami Ranganathanandaji in his commendable lecture, "The Christ we adore." After narrating briefly the salient features and events of Christ's life Swamiji adds, "These are, then, some of the salient features of the life and teachings of this arresting personality, whom the Hindus spontaneously recognize as a divine incarnation. As we have seen, his life is full of sweetness and tenderness, tragedy and pathos; it is spiritually inspiring. To us in India, however, the end is just a tragedy, bereft of any special spiritual beauty. It is the life that is, in our view, spiritually beautiful and elevating. The deaths of our own spiritual heroes, Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, were near tragic; but we did not build our religion on them. India treats the manner of their deaths most casually, while she seeks to build her religion on their lives and teachings...." (The Christ we adore, p. 39-40) Christ, even if he had not been crucified would have been as dear to the Hindu heart because of the life he lived and the message he delivered. But, for the West, without the tragedy of crucifixion, Christ's life would have been stale and sterile, devoid of the saving value of his martyrdom. After all, the West is brought up in the tradition of the pathos of the Greek tragedy. To the Hindu, all life and the whole world is the Lila of the Blissful God. This is one of the factors that keep "Christ crucified" away from the Hindu mind.

I fervently hope and sincerely believe that these two volumes will bring a clearer, better and more authentic understanding about Christianity in India and will ultimately pave the way for a better and more cordial understanding between all concerned.

P. Parameswaran

80 03

### EDITORIAL NOTE

Expressions of Christianity, with a focus on India deals with Christianity's historical developments both in the West and in Asia. As the title suggests, we have looked at the practical, outer expressions of Christianity rather than its theological foundations. What interests us is not how a Christian preacher might ideally present his creed, but how it has manifested in actual fact for pre- or non-Christian Europeans, for the natives of America, Africa or India — also for Western intellectuals who started questioning Christianity. We readily acknowledge that we cannot do justice to such a vast and complex theme in a single volume, but we have tried to offer an overview, of which the average Indian reader will usually be quite unaware as it is: while this perspective is frequently and freely discussed in the West, it rarely, if ever, forms part of debates on Christianity in India. Indian Christians themselves have the foggiest notion of the history of their religion, its origins, its expansion, its institutions, its destruction of other cultures, the ways in which it was challenged by leading Western intellectuals, its clash with science, and finally its spectacular retreat in the West.

The material we present, not exhaustive by any means, is authentic and intended to stimulate an informed debate, rather than the sort of well-meaning but hopelessly idealistic "dialogues" we hear about all too often these days, which naturally can lead nowhere.

We have arranged the articles in five parts:

- 1. Origins and early history of Christianity;
- 2. Expressions of Christianity in the West;
- 3. Expressions of Christianity in India and elsewhere in Asia;
- 4. Intellectual challenges to Christianity;
- 5. The decline of Christianity.

A brief editorial note *in italics* precedes many of the articles; editorial additions for the purpose of clarification are always [within square brackets], which means that all parentheses are the author's; and if footnotes are ours, they end with "(Eds.)." Internet links given in footnotes or endnotes are valid as of 31 August 2006. Editorial omissions are marked throughout by a separate series of three dots, without square brackets. All boxed items (enclosed in a frame) have been prepared by the Vivekananda Kendra's editorial team.

Our thanks are due first to the authors\* who wrote papers specially for this book and its forthcoming companion volume, Christianity: Proselytism and Conversion, with a focus on India; then to all those who suggested material, advised us on the selection, or assisted us in the editing of these two volumes, in particular Michel Danino, Nicole Elfi, Sandhya Jain, M. Pramod Kumar and S. Aravindan Neelakandan.

80 03

<sup>\*</sup> We have made every effort to obtain permission for reproducing articles published elsewhere; should there be any omission in this regard, we request the concerned authors / publishers to kindly contact us.

### Part 1

# Origins and Early History of Christianity

# CHRISTIANITY, A MAN-MADE RELIGION INDEBTED TO INDIA

#### Koenraad Elst

The author is a well-known Belgian scholar and author of several important studies of India. In this paper, he argues that Christianity, which claims to be a divinely revealed religion, actually borrowed many of its constituent elements from older, "Pagan" religions and traditions, including those of India.\*

#### 1. Introduction

The Hindu argument against Christianity has focused on three elements. Firstly, the Christian missionary drive has been denounced as a form of violence by Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Ram Swarup (1992), Swami Dayananda Saraswati of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (Coimbatore), the organized Hindutva movement and others, and this judgment has found support in documentation by various neutral agencies, the best-known of which was the 1950s' Niyogi Committee Report on missionary practices in Madhya Pradesh. It is tempting to deduce from this the demand to prohibit conversion by law, which raises the question whether this would be in conflict with the Hindu tradition of pluralism and toleration. Indeed, at a time when Hindu organizations work for

<sup>\*</sup> Among Koenraad Elst's recent titles, we may mention *Decolonizing* the Hindu Mind – Ideological Development of Hindu Revivalism (Delhi: Rupa, 2001) and The Saffron Swastika: the Notion of "Hindu Fascism" (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2001), 2 vols. (Eds.)

the reconversion of Indian Christians and Muslims, a prohibition on conversion and on religious propaganda seems anomalous.

Secondly, the flawed human rights record of Christianity and its involvement with various imperialisms has been documented by scholars such as K. M. Panikkar (1929), A. K. Priolkar (1961), Ishwar Sharan (1995) and Sita Ram Goel (1996). Lazy-minded Hindus have extended this critique into a shrill rhetoric identifying Christianity with "colonial exploitation," "white racism," "CIA infiltration" and the like, and at any rate identifying it as "foreign," losing their focus on Christianity itself and shifting it to external items with which it may be (or, in most cases, have been) associated. The missionaries have long bypassed these anachronistic polemicists and advertise their product as the religion of the oppressed, the Dalits and Adivasis. They roundly recognize that Christians as sinful human beings have often "been part of the problem," but that now, having rediscovered the true spirit of Christianity, they "have become part of the solution." Both sides are beating around the bush: social reform and anti-oppressive policies are not intrinsic to Christianity any more than its temporary association with Europe or the USA, and in any case neither could make it the one true and salvific religion. It remains useful to highlight the record of Christian justification of slavery and of its atrocities against unbelievers as a significant (and failed) test of its ethical claims, but this should never be taken as a substitute for the central objection to Christian doctrine, still entirely valid in Christianity's postcolonial and post-atrocity phase, viz. that its defining beliefs are untrue. Even if the record of the Churches had been lilywhite, it would still not constitute a reason for accepting their deluded doctrines about man, God and salvation.

Thirdly, the Western scholarly critique of the doctrinal contradictions and oddities in the core teachings of Christianity and the crucial role of scriptural manipulation and history distortion in the genesis of its defining text corpus,

started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and nurtured by sensational findings in the 20<sup>th</sup> (detailed survey by Slavenburg 2005), was introduced in India by Swami Dayananda Saraswati of the Arya Samaj and others of his generation, and has been seriously studied, adapted to and expanded with specifically Hindu viewpoints by Ram Swarup (1992, 1995), Sita Ram Goel (1986, 1994) and Arun Shourie (2000). It turns out that almost everything about the New Testament is uncertain and disputed, from the names of the authors to the very existence of Jesus. If Hindu society is to stem the advances of Christian expansionism, it needs to make these findings widely known on a war footing.

This matter gets slightly complicated, however, by other findings which have been embraced and highlighted by sentimental "equal truth of all religions" Hindus (and in a more measured manner even by the great scholar A. K. Coomaraswamy, e.g. 1937-41) as well as by Western New-Agers, viz. the presence of common pan-religious structures and symbols and conventions in both traditions, as well as the presence of highly unorthodox elements in the oldest and largely apocryphal layer of Christian scripture, some of which demonstrably have a common origin with certain Hindu-Buddhist teachings, while others have their origin in the variety of teachings flourishing in the Hellenistic world and with which Hindus need not have any quarrel. These elements of a lost proto-Christianity, greatly at variance with the actual Christianity propagated by the Churches for about seventeen centuries and now by the missionaries in India, are often used to lull Hindus into disarming against Christian aggression. However, they could just as well remind everyone that spirituality is a universal potential of all mankind, and that the confrontation with Hinduism should encourage Christians to shed their self-righteousness and to go and rediscover their proto-Christian and pre-Christian roots.

Let us now look more closely into the scholarly findings about the non-Christian roots of Christianity.

### 2. Jesus in India?

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hindu reform movement Brahmo Samaj (founded in 1820) tried to protect the essence of Hinduism against the perceived threat from missionary Christianity by incorporating the latter's most attractive elements and "recognizing" them as somehow part of Hinduism's own tradition. In particular, monotheism, the notion of "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man" and the rejection of idol worship were borrowed from Protestant Christianity. The Brahmoists didn't simply replace Hindu notions with Christian ones but rather reinterpreted Hinduism, e.g. they explained Hindu polytheism as a masked monotheism ("polymorphous theism"), taking support from the Vedic verse: "Indra, Agni, Varuna, etc., the wise ones call the One True Being by many names" (RV 1:164:46).

Another reform movement, the Arya Samaj (founded in 1875), followed suit: though it took a more polemical stand against the Christian missionaries than the Brahmos ever did, it professed monotheism and actively campaigned against idol worship. Next, the mixed Indian-European membership of the syncretistic Theosophical Society added more colourful ideas of Hindu-Buddhist-Christian interaction and mystical common denominators, e.g. by explaining the Christian notion of "the Kingdom of God" as referring to a blissful yogic state of consciousness. The Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society, though numerically small, were very influential among the anglicized bourgeoisie, while the Arya Samaj exercised a strong influence on India's national liberation movement and on Hindu nationalism. Though the strictures against idol worship and participation in popular Hindu festivals gradually gave way to an accommodation with the Hindu mainstream, some doctrinal innovations persisted and started influencing the mainstream in turn. It should not come as a surprise, then, that numerous Hindus have interiorized certain Christian notions, most prominently a highly favourable prejudice regarding the person of Jesus Christ.

With hindsight, we can say that this partial incorporation of Christian elements was arguably the most effective defence of Hinduism against the lure of Christian conversion campaigns under circumstances of Christian colonial dominance. Rather than confronting Christianity, this approach neutralized its appeal by understanding Jesus in Hindu terms, as a spiritual teacher, venerable yet only one among many, not as a unique Saviour. By giving Jesus a place, it made the acceptance of the full doctrinal package of Christianity seem superfluous. Instead, modern Hindus including Mahatma Gandhi started evaluating all religions as roughly equivalent "paths" leading to the same goal. Most of them don't realize that this idea is not welcomed but rather abhorred by orthodox Christians.

The incorporation of Jesus in Indian spiritual tradition was given a more concrete shape in the belief that Jesus learned his trade in India before going on an eventful preaching tour in Palestine whence he returned to stay and breathe his last in Kashmir at the ripe age of 115 (e.g. Kersten 1986). This claim of Jesus' sojourn among Indian yogis is frequently heard among Hindus, Theosophists, some South-Asian Muslims and even — since Indian spirituality is internationally often identified with its Buddhist variant — among Buddhists from Japan to California. In 1983, I attended a lecture by the Japanese Zen teacher Hogen-san, and he held up a photograph of an ancient painting purportedly showing first-hand, never mind the anachronism, a meeting of the Buddha and Christ!

The story of Jesus' India connection apparently originates with the Ahmadiyas, a Muslim sect founded in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He claimed to be a prophet in defiance of the Islamic dogma that Mohammed was the final prophet. The belief that Jesus, a high-ranking prophet in Islam, had lived in India, was meant to buttress Ahmad's claim that India, though far away from the West-Asian homeland of the Abrahamic religions, could nonetheless be the

locus of a legitimate prophet's mission. It is sometimes given additional support with the late-medieval belief that the Pathans, who live just to the west of Kashmir, are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. This belief, based on superficial likenesses between the names of some Hebrew and some Pathan tribes, would explain how Jesus' Jewish parents could send their son to distant relatives in north-western India for his education. Or how one eccentric theory can carry an even more eccentric one in its bosom.

Meanwhile, there have also been Christian overtures towards Hinduism, particularly in the "Christian ashram" movement. The idea was launched by a Bengali convert, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (d. 1907), who was enough of a nationalist to insist on giving a Hindu colouring to his adopted Christian religion. He clashed with his superiors when he held a devotional ritual to goddess Saraswati and gave praise to Krishna and the Vedas. After independence, his inculturation experiments were revived by Catholic missionaries like Jules Monchanin (d. 1957), Henri Le Saux (d. 1973) and Bede Griffiths (d. 1999), who justified this move as a necessary strategy to speed up the disappointingly slow process of converting India.

In their "ashrams," designed with temple-like architecture and ornamentation, they served vegetarian meals, wore homespun saffron robes and incorporated into their liturgy Vedic phrases such as: "Lead me from death to immortality." Le Saux renamed himself Abhishiktananda, "bliss of the Anointed One [i.e. the Messiah]," while Monchanin called his hermitage the Sacchidananda Ashram, "hermitage of Being-Consciousness-Bliss." Fortunately for them, Hindu religious vocabulary contained not only explicitly polytheistic and un-Christian god-names but also many abstract spiritual concepts which a Christian could use without overtly lapsing into heresy.

All the same, Indian Christians and especially recent converts rejected this "paganization of Christianity." So do the guardians of orthodoxy, e.g. in his book *On the Threshold of Hope* (1994), Pope John-Paul II denounced the trend among

Christian monks and laymen to explore Oriental techniques of meditation, and in 2000, his statement *Dominus Jesus* reaffirmed that salvation can only come through Jesus, not through other "paths." Genuine Hindus aren't too enthusiastic either. Thus, one of the favourite symbols of the Christian ashram movement was the Aum sign on a cross. The combination is absurd, at least if the cross is taken in its Christian sense as the symbol of suffering. Though Hinduism has a place for the notions of suffering and sin, the Aum sign by contrast represents the cosmic vibration and eternal bliss.

In this paper, we have no intention of arguing for this relatively recent tradition of Hindu-Christian syncretism or for the thesis of Jesus' sojourn in India. Instead, we will explore the unsensational possibility of India-related influences on Christianity which can be explained through cultural tendencies present in the Eastern Mediterranean, in Jesus' surroundings. We will survey indications that some elements in Judaism, in Jesus' preachings and in mature Church doctrine can indeed be traced to the broader Indo-Iranian tradition through three of its layers and offshoots: (1) the basic Indo-European culture of which certain motifs were still palpable in the ambient Hellenistic culture; (2) Zarathushtra's Mazdeism, a (partly rebellious) offshoot of the Indo-Iranian religion, which influenced Judaism in the 6th-4th century BC, and whose Romano-Hellenistic offshoot Mithraism influenced the nascent Christian doctrine; (3) ideas from missionary Buddhism and other Indian schools of thought which were in the air in the Eastern Roman empire and influenced the Gospels, sometimes through the mediation of other Hellenistic philosophy schools but sometimes also very directly. For our present purposes, a brief overview of these common or borrowed elements will suffice before we focus on their meaning and implications for the science of comparative religion.

#### 3. Inculturation

It is well-known that in its campaigns of conversion, Christianity followed a policy of *inculturation*. This means that it adopted Pagan elements in christianized form in order to ease the transition from Paganism to Christianity. To be sure, the practice of reinterpreting religious items long predates Christianity. Thus, Judaism turned an ancient spring festival into a day of remembrance of the exodus from Egypt (*Pesach*), replacing universal nature with national history as its religious point of reference. Hindus fused an ancient harvest celebration with the commemoration of victorious Rama's coronation (*Diwali*) and Buddhists turned May day into a celebration of the Buddha's birth or enlightenment (*Wesak*). But Christianity was the first to use this type of reinterpretation systematically as a strategy for conversion.

Pagan gods became Christian saints, e.g. Isis with the babe Horus became the Madonna with Child. The bearded and horse-borne Germanic god Wodan became Saint Nicolas, later americanized as Santa Claus. Even the Buddha found a place on the saints' calendar under the name Saint Josaphat; according to Amore (1978:120), "The storytellers framed Josaphat's early years with the story of the Buddha's birth, childhood, and departure." The autumnal celebration of the dead became All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, which is nowadays regaining its purely Pagan colours in the form of Hallowe'en.

A separate priesthood was created along with a standard liturgy, on the model of religious professionalism in the established Pagan religions or in the popular Mystery cults. Concepts and terms from Greek philosophy were incorporated in Christian theology. Churches arose where temples or sacred trees had stood, so that worshippers could keep on coming to their old places of worship and gradually get used to the Christian liturgy there.

The date of Easter (from the Germanic dawn goddess

Eostra / Ostarra) combines the Pagan symbolism of Spring Equinox and Full Moon with the Christian innovation of Sunday as the day of the Lord. The choice of Sunday was itself borrowed from the solar cult of Mithraism, a late-Roman kind of Masonic Lodge inspired by both Iranian Mazdeism and astrology. Winter Solstice as the feast of the reviving Invincible Sun became Christmas.

In fact, the whole cult of the year cycle in Mithraism (not unrelated to that of the Vedic year-cycle god Prajapati) deeply influenced the Christian liturgical calendar, so that Protestant fundamentalists would later object — quite accurately — that most Church festivals including even Christmas are Pagan borrowings devoid of scriptural foundation. The ritual of the Eucharist, in which Christians are deemed to be drinking Christ's blood (sacrilege to Jews), may also be of Mithraic inspiration with its blood libation after the bull sacrifice.

### 4. Trinity and trifunctionality

Among the typically Christian innovations vis-à-vis Judaism, the notion of the *Divine Trinity*, rejected by Jews and Muslims as crypto-polytheistic, clearly bears the imprint of the Indo-European tripolar cosmology known as *trifunctionality*. This cosmological model is speculatively traced to the original Proto-Indo-European culture of the linguistic ancestors of the peoples speaking the various Indo-European languages. While that culture is beyond our reach in terms of primary sources, its tripolar schema is well-attested in its daughter cultures, as we shall see. It may even have percolated into Christian theology. Because this element in the variegated sources of Christianity has so far been recognized and studied only rarely, we will present it in some more detail.

"For Indo-Europeans, all human and divine society are divided in three parts, having to do with order, action and sustenance," according to Porter & Hobbs (1999:1) The best-known explicitation of this fundamental motif is the Hindu

system of triguna, "the three qualities": (1) sattva, "beingness, truth, goodness," the pole of calm and clarity, symbolized by the daylight, the white colour and the majestic heavens: (2) rajas, "turbulence," the pole of dynamism and passion. symbolized by the twilight, the red colour and the stormy atmosphere; (3) tamas, "darkness," the pole of inertia, materiality and sustenance, symbolized by the night, the dark colours and the all-bearing earth. (To complicate matters and take the equivocality of symbolism into account, the twilight with its moderate temperature and sacral mood can also count as sattvika, the daylight with its heat can also count as rajasika.) In society, the three poles correspond to three social functions and the classes performing them: (1) order and legitimacy are the province of judges, poets, priests and of the king in his sacral role as embodiment of a nation's sovereignty; (2) action is the province of administrators and soldiers, and of the king in his role as commander-in-chief; (3) sustenance is the province of the farmers, craftsmen and other producing classes, of health care providers and entertainers, and of all members of society in so far as they partake in the process of fertility and multiplication.

The trifunctionality model is in evidence in a number of Indo-European pantheons. Thus, Germanic *Tiwaz/Woden* first function, *Donar* second, *Freyr* third; Roman *Dius-Fidius/Jupiter* first, *Mars* second, *Quirinus* third; Vedic *Mitra/Varuna* first, *Indra* second, the *Nasatya* twins third. As can be seen, the first function is often divided between two gods, corresponding to its two aspects: Mitra or Dius Fidius concerns the order created by the agreements between people, while Varuna or Jupiter signifies the religious dimension of an intrinsic cosmic order. The post-Vedic *triguna* model corresponds as follows with the post-Vedic divine trinity (*trimurti*): the creator Brahma corresponds to the *rajasika* dawn, the sustainer and solar deity Vishnu to the *sattvika* daylight, the leveller and moon-god Shiva to the *tamasika* night.

Indo-European cultures which had integrated strong and

developed pre-Indo-European substratal cultures, typically had inflected versions of the trifunctionality model: broken symmetry, confusion of functions. This is particularly true of the one most likely to have an effect on nascent Christian theology, viz. Greek culture. Thus, the Trojan protagonist Paris has to choose the favours of either the regal Hera, the warlike Athena or the voluptuous Aphrodite, which seems to follow the tripolar model neatly enough; but then Hera offers him sovereignty (first function) but also wealth (third), while Athena offers him victory (second) but also handsomeness (at least partly a third-function attribute) and wisdom (first).

Can the trifunctionality model be applied to the Christian trinity? You can readily capture the intellectual high ground by dismissing this as a "mere numerical coincidence," but some authors have argued convincingly that there is more to it, as follows. The Father, the irascible Old-Testamentic warriorgod Yahweh, fulfils the second function; the Son, the beatific Prince of Peace, the first; while the Holy Ghost, the life-giver (who impregnates the Virgin Mary), healer (who confers healing powers on the apostles) and multiplier of the faithful (by speaking through the prophets and inspiring people to conversion), fulfils the third function. Porter & Hobbs (1999:14) admit a certain anomaly: "What is immediately surprising is that the first function is assigned to the second person, the Son, and the second function is assigned to the first Person, the Father," essentially because: "God the Son brings redemption from sin, a first-function problem, and God the Father brings blessing in contingency, a secondfunction problem."

For now we will not pursue this hypothesis further, but we can agree that there is a *prima facie* case for recognizing the trifunctionality model in the Christian Trinity. The historical reconstruction of what influences on the developing construction of the Trinity doctrine by the Church Fathers have led to this neat correlation remains to be completed.

### 5. More than inculturation: the impact of Buddhism

In this process of inculturation, the Christian Church remained in control: it adapted old forms to its new message, but made sure that through the Pagan veneer the Christian doctrine was impressed upon the converts. However, the incorporation of Indic and particularly Buddhist elements which we will now discuss, has had a far deeper impact. It preceded the genesis of a discernible Christian religion and Church and determined some of their most central doctrines.

The Gospels contain a number of almost literal repetitions of phrases, parables and scenes from the Buddhist canon, particularly from the biographical Mahaparinirvana-Sutra: the master walking on water (and saying to the baffled disciples: "It's me"), the simile of the blind leading the blind, the multiplication of the loaves of bread, the master asking and accepting water from a woman belonging to a despised community, the call not to pass judgment on others, the call to respond to hostility with love, and other overly well-known motifs (Garbe 1914, Gruber & Kersten 1995, Derrett 2001). Both doctrinal elements and biographical anecdotes have been borrowed. The Buddha's mother saw in a dream how a white elephant placed the promising boy in her womb while a heavenly being revealed the great news to the father, roughly like the annunciation to Mary and Joseph. The loose but devout woman Mary Magdalene is a neat copy of the Buddha-revering courtesan Amrapali (Lindtner 2000). The iconography of Jesus resembles that of the expected future Buddha Maitreya, incidentally a name derived from maitri, "fellow-feeling, friendship," close enough to the Christian notion of agape / charity. The Maitreya is depicted with lotus flowers in the places where Jesus has stigmata of the crucifixion. Saint Paul declares preferring the salvation of others even at the price of his own, just like the Mahayana-Buddhist initiate vows to liberate all beings before extinguishing himself.

This is becoming too much for coincidence, and the similarity

is moreover strengthened by very specific details. Thus, Jesus relates how a *widow* offers *two* pennies from her humble possessions and thereby earns more merit than a wealthy man who gives a larger gift from his abundant riches. In Buddhist texts we find the same message in several variants, among them that of a *widow* offering *two* pennies; a holy monk disregards the larger gift of a wealthy man and praises the widow's piety. Any class of pauper could have served the purpose of the parable, as could any small amount of money, but in both cases it is a *widow* offering her *two* cents.

Not to make all this too idyllic, we can point out a less fashionable item which Christianity may have borrowed from Buddhism: the depreciation of woman as focus of lust and continuator of life in this vale of tears. We do not mean the belief in the inequality of man and woman, which is nearuniversal, even in fertility-promoting religions like Judaism, Vedic Brahmanism or Confucianism. While these cultures celebrate intercourse with woman and the harvest of her womb as a grand sacrament of life, Christianity and Buddhism tend to condemn life as tainted by sin and suffering, hence procreation and sexuality as sources of misery, and woman as an inauspicious temptress. Celibacy as the Buddhist monks' way of life was foreign to both Greeks and Jews but was adopted and held up as ideal by Saint Paul and the Christian monks. Buddhism and Christianity allow sex and procreation to the outer circle of half-hearted followers ("better to marry than to burn"), but prefer total asceticism for the inner circle of true seekers.

### 6. Abrahamic versus Pagan

The gap between the Hindu-Buddhist tradition and Christianity is at first sight much deeper than that between Christianity and Judaism or Islam. Unlike the latter two, Indic religions have no common "Abrahamic" roots with Christianity. Hinduism in particular may count as par excellence the

representative of the ancient hate object and scapegoat of the Abrahamic religions including Christianity: *Paganism*. Hostility towards Paganism is historically the first and defining commitment of the Abrahamic tradition. "Thou shalt have no other Gods," or: "There is no God except Allah," concretely meant to its original audiences: "Fight Paganism and its false Gods."

As mentioned above, many modern Hindus have interiorized the Abrahamic strictures against polytheism and against the use of icons in worship. It is only in recent decades that the late Ram Swarup (1980, 1992) has taken up the defence of both polytheism and "idolatry." He dismisses the numerical quarrel over one or many as silly and irrelevant to Hinduism, which acknowledges both the unity and the multiplicity of the Divine. Concerning idolatry, he points out that depictions of the Godhead are only visual aides to mental concentration on the Divine Person behind the image (as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox segments of the Abrahamic family have also argued against their iconoclastic critics). As even ordinary Hindus are heard arguing: does keeping a photograph of a loved one diminish or harm your love for him or her? Does destroying the photograph make the love more authentic? Ram Swarup also adds a spiritual critique: Christian (and mutatis mutandis, Islamic) exclusivism, which limits Salvation to those who believe in Christ's divinity and resurrection, betrays a lack of confidence in God's omnipresence.

In contemporary forums for Jewish-Christian or Muslim-Christian dialogue, the "common Abrahamic roots" are eagerly highlighted. The religions concerned are said to have plenty in common, starting with their belief in One Creator and in His Self-Revelation through prophets. The dialogue delegates, and even the less dialogue-minded orthodox theologians, agree that certain basic doctrines set the Abrahamic religions collectively apart from all the other religions, collectively known as Paganism. While inter-religious dialogue is a recent fashion, Christians have always made the distinction

between the Abrahamic (viz. Muslim or Jewish) and the Pagan non-Christians, acknowledging in the former a far greater religious kinship with themselves than in the latter.

Along with Ram Swarup, many contemporary Hindus have interiorized this dichotomy between Abrahamic and Pagan religions, but this time to line up *against* the Abrahamic alternative, deemed narrow-minded and spiritually immature. While the disagreement about which doctrine is good and which is bad remains, there is now an agreement between these Hindu ideologues and their Abrahamic opponents about at least this fundamental division of the religious landscape in two opposing poles: the Pagan religions professed and practised in various evolving forms by mankind since the Palaeolithic, and Abrahamic religions springing from God's Self-revelation to selected human beings in West Asia in the last few millennia. And yet, this dichotomy may not be all that neat.

Firstly, it has often been pointed out that the crucial belief in monotheism may well have as one of its tributaries an evolute of the Indo-Iranian religion, hence a sister of the Vedic religion, viz. Iranian Mazdeism. In at least some layers of Mazdeic scripture, we find the rejection of the Indo-Iranian gods (daevas), who are turned into devils, in favour of the double-god Mitra-Varuna, extolled under the appellative name Ahura Mazda, "Lord Wisdom." This seems to prefigure Mohammed's rejection of most Arab gods in favour of a single one among them, Allah, and also to resemble Moses' rejection of Semitic gods like Ba'al in favour of Yahweh alone. Given that the genesis of true monotheism in ancient Israel was a slow and complicated process, and given the occupation of West Asia by the Mazdeic Iranians in the 6th century BC (where they explicitly helped to re-establish the Yahwist cult in the rebuilt temple of Jerusalem), it is not far-fetched to propose a Mazdeic influence on Israelite monotheism. though its outline remains vague.

However, if there was such a Mazdeic influence, it cannot

be construed as an indirect influence from the Vedic upon the Israelite religion, for it concerns precisely that part of Mazdeism which originated in the break away from and reaction against the Indo-Iranian mainstream as preserved in the Vedas. Elements attributed to Mazdeic influence, such as the eschatology of physical resurrection, arrival of a redeemer and final judgment, definitely originate in later internal developments in Mazdeism, unrelated (whether by conserving or even by rejecting) to the old Indo-Iranian core beliefs.

The second element interfering with the neat dichotomy between Pagan and Abrahamic looks more promising for our present study. We will be able to show that there are doctrinal similarities between the Christian and the Hindu-Buddhist traditions which set the former apart from the other Abrahamic religions, and the latter from the other Pagan religions. These similarities are certainly the fruit of historical contacts, probably through the westernmost outposts of Buddhist missionary expansion, though the details of the whereabouts of Buddhists in West Asia are as yet eluding us. We will consider the two most important common points of doctrine: Incarnation and Salvation.

### 7. Salvation

In the *Upanishads*, the youngest and most explicitly philosophical layer of Vedic literature, attention shifts from the ritual fire sacrifice to the interior of man's consciousness. If we empty it of the sensory and mental contents which usually occupy it, we see in it our true nature, the Self. Or in the terms of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* (1:3-4): "Then the observing entity rests in its own form. Otherwise, there is identification with the mental fluctuations." However, experiencing the mental silence in which the realization of the Self dawns is easier said than done. So, determined seekers made it their full-time occupation to pierce the veil of mental dross, to seek liberation from the web of ignorance, false identification and

attachment. It is among this class of seekers that the Buddha emerged as the discoverer and teacher of the most successful and well-rounded method.

The goal of the Upanishadic and Buddhist yogis was "liberation" (mukti, moksha), or, in the Buddha's more negativesounding terminology, "windlessness" (nirvana). This is a double-negative concept: first a problem intrinsically affecting all people is defined (suffering, ignorance, attachment), then a method of eliminating the problem is devised and put into practice, ideally resulting in liberation. Exactly the same doctrinal structure forms the core of Christianity: all human beings are afflicted with original Sin incurred by Adam and Eve, and now they stand in need of Salvation, which the religion provides. This notion of a radical wrongness in the human condition and of a concomitant radical jump out of it and into the state of Salvation does not exist in Judaism and Islam. Neither does it exist in most Pagan religions, such as the ancient Greek religion, Confucianism or Shinto. Apparently, it did not even exist in the oldest Vedic layer of Hinduism, though this is disputed: many Hindus but also some Western scholars (e.g. Kazanas 2003) hold that in metaphorical language, the Vedic Samhitas already carry the same message as the Upanishads. Be that as it may, it can hardly be denied that many so-called Pagan religions with their often uncritical lust for life differ from mature Hinduism and Buddhism in this respect.

How is Liberation or Salvation achieved? The original Hindu-Buddhist answer is: through right effort, viz. through a meditative practice which stills all mental distractions. However, this path of self-liberation is demanding and fails to deliver the immediate consolation ordinary people hope for. So, soon enough a devotional practice developed which attributed to the Buddha, or likewise to Shiva or Krishna, the power to somehow "grant" Liberation to his devotees. In quantitative terms, the devotional-theistic variety of Mahayana Buddhism has eclipsed the pure do-it-yourself approach

of the Buddha's own agnostic doctrine, e.g. through the very popular Pure Land school of Sino-Japanese Buddhism (vide Spae 1980:85 ff.). Praying for Liberation is far more common than working for it.

Hindu philosophers have distinguished between two approaches to Liberation: the "way of the baby monkey," which clings to its mother through its own effort, and the "way of the kitten," which is picked up by its mother between her teeth. In practice, the way of the kitten is the most popular by far: people make the effort of putting themselves into a religious mood but expect the real breakthrough to Salvation from a caring and interventionist Divine Person. Though most Hindus and Buddhists vaguely know of the fruits of meditation, few of them actually practise it. Most settle for devotional practices such as chanting and waving incense sticks before an idol of a Divine or Liberated Person whose power should come and save them from their own state of attachment and ignorance.

It is at this devotional stage, which purists would evaluate as a degenerative stage, that Christianity has picked up the Hindu-Buddhist notion of Liberation, rephrased as a doctrine of Salvation by a Divine Being. Just like the Oriental devotee expects Shiva or the Amitabha Buddha or Guan Yin (Chinese Buddhist goddess) to save him, the Christian reveres Jesus Christ as the agent of his Salvation. Though Christian mystics have tried to come closer to God through meditative techniques, Christianity as such has no technology of Salvation, unlike orthodox Buddhism. On the contrary, it denounces the idea that man can save himself as hubris. Official Christian doctrine confines the possibilities of Salvation to the salvific intervention of God through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

### 8. Incarnation

Jews and Muslims have always denounced Christianity as

an incomplete or downright false pretender to monotheism. They see the doctrine of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) as detracting from God's unity and unicity. Leaving aside for now the Holy Spirit, it is mainly the Divine Person of the Son, God Incarnate, which strict monotheists find theologically incorrect.

In Hellenistic society, people had a very fuzzy notion of "god" and didn't mind describing remarkably spiritual people or purported miracle-workers as "divine." Ancient heroes such as Hercules were deified after their deaths in a process known as apotheosis, "transformation into a god," and placed among the stars in the night sky. The Hindus posthumously deified their heroes Rama and Krishna by reinterpreting their lives as incarnations of Lord Vishnu. In Buddhism, the historical Buddha is gradually given the status of a divine incarnation, one in a series of enlightened beings descended on earth in order to bring Liberation to all the suffering beings. Pagan Semitic cultures, e.g. in Ugarit, likewise gave a posthumous divine status to their most revered kings by associating them with one of the gods, such as El or Ba'al. This process of association was called shirk, a term later generalized by Mohammed to every "association" of lesser beings with the one God, Allah ("the god"). Muslims refer to all polytheists as mushrikin, "associators," viz. of lesser beings with Allah.

In the opinion of the Muslims, the Jews and the Arian heretics of Christianity, the allotment of a divine status to Jesus Christ is not truly different from the procedure by which the Pagans gave divine status to their kings and saints, to stars and trees and mountains, even to animal species (Egyptian cats, Hindu cows) and sculpted statues, briefly to *creatures* instead of the Creator. They think, quite sensibly, that Christian belief detracts from monotheism by adopting as its most central dogma the highly Pagan notion that a creature, the son of a woman, could be God. On this point, Christianity is undeniably less akin to Judaism and Islam than to those sects

of Hinduism and Buddhism which deify historic figures like Krishna and the Buddha.

To be sure, we should not fall into the New Age trap of papering over the very real differences between the Christian doctrine of Salvation and the Indian traditions of Liberation. Thus, it is commonly claimed in New Age writings that the early Christians believed in reincarnation, a belief allegedly discarded by narrow-minded Council Fathers in subsequent centuries. This is not supported by early Christian documents, and at any rate, a belief in reincarnation is logically incompatible with the belief in the Resurrection as the crowning glory of Jesus' mission on earth. If the resurrection of the body is glorified as the victory over death, this implies that life in the body is worth preserving eternally and bodily death is the problem. But if reincarnation is a reality. the death of the body is but a superficial phenomenon, like undressing before putting on fresh clothes. In that case, eternal life whether inside or outside the body is simply a given. In the Buddhist view, which aims at the dissolution of the individual, the eternal bodily life promised to the Christian as the ultimate reward and the ultimate act of Divine Charity to mankind, isn't even a state of things to be cherished or desired. Therefore, it would be rash and unjustified to pretend that Christianity is simply a Buddhist doctrine in Semitic or Hellenistic garb. But it would be equally unjustified to deny the common element in their views of saving mankind from the intrinsic flaws in the human condition.

### 9. Charity

Christianity's number one selling point is its emphasis on the virtue of *love* (not to be misinterpreted as erotic love) or *charity*. Missionaries like to contrast universal Christian charity with Jewish ethnocentrism, Muslim or Marxist programmes of armed struggle, Hindu callous indifference to the suffering of members of other castes, or Buddhism's ethereal disinterest in any useful worldly work per se. However, this notion of universal fellow-feeling and its implementation in

works of charity definitely predates Christianity.

Four centuries before Christ, the Chinese school of Mozi already preached *jian'ai*, "universal love," and put it into practice in self-supporting communities, comparable to those established by the Epicureans in the Hellenistic world. These Mohists argued that one's love should be distributed evenly over all fellow-men, while their Confucian contemporaries contended that love should be differentiated in intensity: more love for close relatives, less for distant acquaintances, less still for unknown people. Yet, even the Confucians taught that some fellow-feeling or "fellow-humanity" (*ren*) should be extended to all mankind. Meanwhile in India, the Vedas and later the Buddha extolled fellow-feeling or compassion (*daya* c.q. *karuna*), not just towards one's fellow men but towards all sentient beings.

It may be admitted that Christianity gave its own twist to charity. The activist streak of going out and opening orphanages or hospitals is less in evidence in Hinduism or Buddhism than in Christian settlements. Unlike Buddhist and Hindu monks, who are only expected to do their devotional or yogic duties, Christian monks of most orders are required to work. It may be conceded that Buddhist monks sometimes did take upon themselves certain charitable activities, notably in medicine, which is after all an application of the basic Buddhist vocation to relieve suffering. Among the duties of kings, Hindu scriptures include the care for the needy and the handicapped. Even so, there is just no denying that among religious personnel, Christian monks were and are encouraged far more systematically than any others to give a materially constructive expression to their sense of charity.

The reason for this difference, according to Hindus and Buddhists convinced of the superiority of their own tradition, is that Christian missionaries had to "sell" their doctrinal "product" by giving the extra bonus of material help, just like salesmen of inferior products try to make people buy them with the lure of extras. In this view, a convert to Buddhism

opts for the Buddhist Way, while a convert to Christianity may take Christian beliefs in his stride while primarily seeking access to the Christian network of charity. A less polemical explanation would be that the wider family units in India could better provide for the needs of their own sick and needy members, hence requiring less help from "public" charities than the uprooted masses of the late Roman empire or the industrial-age West. (Note that Mother Teresa made her name in Kolkata among uprooted immigrants into the modern city, not in a traditional Hindu social setting.)

But the most fundamental reason why traditions originating in India lay less emphasis on material compassion and activist forms of charity, is simply that they pay more attention to what they perceive as a deeper human need. Clothing the naked and feeding the hungry is very fine, but as the Buddha knew from his own young days of luxury, even the well-fed and well-clad are subject to unhappiness and suffering. The highest compassion is therefore not the sharing of material things or emotional attention, but the imparting of the ethical and meditative methods leading to *Nirvana*.

In any case, the whole idea that man should care about his brother, that he should take responsibility for the welfare of society as a whole or for needy human beings in particular. clearly precedes Christianity. Like the Christian, though since centuries earlier, the Hindu or the Buddhist is his brother's keeper, and is taught from childhood not to indulge in selfcentred inanities and mindless self-indulgence (which of course is not to be confused with disciplined self-introspection). The Hindu is expected to take up his very own duty (svadharma) within the larger framework of society and the universe. In Mahayana Buddhism, the bodhisattva oath requires the practitioner to work for the liberation of all fellow sentient beings. Caring for others may legitimately be called a Christian virtue, but it is not exclusively Christian and finds older models in at least Mohism, Confucianism, Epicureanism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and no doubt in other pre-Christian teachings as well. We should also keep in mind that in India, Hindu charities — which, if anything, have been expanding considerably in recent decades, under the inspiration of spiritual leaders and industrial houses alike — are by nature more selfless and less ostentatious than their Christian counterparts, and certainly receive much less attention from the media. Indeed many Hindus maintain, and with good reason, that Mother Teresa's work is easily matched by any number of Hindu charities, although the latter are rarely in public view.

#### 10. Conclusion

Christianity is not as original as it flatters itself to be. Just as it is now widely accepted that the Old Testament has profusely borrowed from older Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources, the New Testament has likewise borrowed some of its core imagery and defining beliefs from the ambient Hellenistic-cosmopolitan culture and from the Indic teachings which had gained a certain popularity in the Eastern Mediterranean region. This implies that rather than being a direct gift from God, Christianity is simply a human construct, just as it already believes all other religions to be. Those who are inspired by Jesus' example and teachings might do well to study their Saviour's own sources of inspiration.

The Christian doctrine of Salvation is borrowed in its essential features from Upanishadic-Buddhist notions of Liberation transformed in a devotional-theistic sense and inserted into a Jewish background unfamiliar with the notion of reincarnation. Along with crypto-polytheistic aspects in the Christian understanding of God, the doctrine of Salvation sets Christianity apart from Judaism and Islam within the "Abrahamic" tradition. Conversely, the doctrine of Liberation sets Hinduism and Buddhism apart within the larger category of "Pagan" religions. This way, the common elements between

the more sophisticated Indic doctrines and Christianity reveal a dimension which cuts through the neat dichotomy between Abrahamic and Pagan religions.

#### 80 CB

### Bibliography

- ABHISHIKTANANDA, Swami (LE SAUX, Henri): Hindu-Christian Meeting-Point, Delhi 1976.
- AMORE, Roy C., Two Masters, One Message, Abingdon, Nashville, 1978.
- BROCKINGTON, John: Hinduism and Christianity, MacMillan, London 1992.
- COOMARASWAMY, Ananda K.: Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi 1974 (1937-41).
- DAYANANDA Saraswati, Swami (of Coimbatore), and GIRNDT, Helmut: A Vedantin's View of Christian Concepts, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg PA 1998.
- DERRETT, J. Duncan M.: The Bible and the Buddhists, Sardini, Bornato (Italy) 2001.
- GARBE, Richard: Indien und das Christentum. Eine Untersuchung der religionsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhänge, Lühe-Verlag, Süderbrarup 2004 (1914).
- GOEL, Sita Ram: Papacy, Its Doctrine and History, Voice of India, Delhi 1986.
- —: Catholic Ashrams, Sannyasins or Swindlers?, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Voice of India, Delhi 1994.
- —: Jesus Christ, an Artifice for Aggression, Voice of India, Delhi 1994.
- —: History of Hindu-Christian Encounters (AD 304 to 1996), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Voice of India, Delhi 1996.
- GRIFFITHS, Bede: Christ in India, Bangalore 1986.
- GRUBER, Elmar, and KERSTEN, Holger: The Original Jesus. The Buddhist Sources of Christianity. Element Books, Shaftesbury 1995 (München 1995).

- KATTACKAL, Jacob: Comparative Religion, St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam 1990.
- KAZANAS, N: Philosophy and Selfrealization in the Rgveda, Omilos Meleton, Athens 2003.
- KERSTEN, Holger: Jesus Lived in India. His Unknown Life Before and After the Crucifixion, Element Books, Shaftesbury 1986 (Munich 1983).
- KÜNG, Hans, en VON STIETENCRON, Heinrich: *Christendom en Wereldgodsdiensten, 2: Hindoeïsme,* Gooi en Sticht, Hilversum 1987.
- LEEMING, Joseph: Yoga en de Bijbel, Lulof, Almelo 1963.
- LINDTNER, Christian: Amrapali in the Gospels, Adyar Library Bulletin 46, 2000.
- MAJUMDAR, R. C.: The History and Culture of the Indian People, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 1963 ff.
- ODDIE, Geoffrey: Hindu and Christian in South-East Asia, SOAS, London 1991.
- PANIKKAR, K. M.: Malabar and the Portuguese, Voice of India, Delhi 1997 (1929).
- PARRINDER, Geoffrey: Avatar and Incarnation. A Comparison of Indian and Christian Beliefs, OUP, New York 1982.
- PORTER, Andrew P., and HOBBS, Edward C.: "The Trinity and the Indo-European tripartite worldview," *Budhi*, vol.3, nr.2, p.1-29, Manila 1999.
- PRABHAVANANDA, Swami: De Bergrede in het Licht van de Vedanta-Leer, De Driehoek, Amsterdam n.d.
- PRIOLKAR, A.K.: The Goa Inquisition: The Terrible Tribunal for the East, Voice of India, Delhi 1991 (1961).
- RAJARAM, N.S.: Christianity's Scramble for India and the Failure of the 'secularist' Elite, Hindu Writers' Forum, Delhi 1999.
- SECRETARIATUS PRO NON-CHRISTIANIS : Pour un Dialogue avec l'Hindouisme, Ancora, Milano n.d.
- SHARAN, Ishwar: *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Voice of India, Delhi 1995 (1991).

- SHOURIE, Arun: Harvesting Our Souls. Missionaries, Their Designs, Their Claims; ASA, Delhi 2000.
- SLAVENBURG, Jacob: Valsheid in Geschrifte: de Verborgen Agenda van Bijbelschrijvers, Walburg Pers, Zutphen 2005.
- SPAE, Joseph: Buddhist-Christian Empathy, Chicago Institute of Theology and Culture, 1980.
- SWARUP, Ram: The Word as Revelation: Names of Gods, Impex India, Delhi 1980.
- —: Hinduism vis-à-vis Christianity and Islam, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Voice of India, Delhi 1992.
- —: Pope John Paul II on Eastern Religions and Yoga. A Hindu-Buddhist Rejoinder, Voice of India, Delhi 1995.

### How Christian is the New Testament?

Mainstream Christianity projects the New Testament as a revealed Scripture, a wholly new, self-contained, perfect and final teaching straight from God. As Sri Aurobindo once put it, Christians "believe that He wrote a book — only one book in all these ages...." But scholars have long shown the reality to be different and the canonical Gospels to be quite human texts, whose composers made use of many sources and belief systems besides the Judaic ones.



God Mithras

One of the major influences on the shaping of Christianity is acknowledged to be *Mithraism*. This important Roman cult derived from the worship of the Persian god Mithra, whose origin is the Vedic Mitra; adopted by the Romans, he became Mithras and fused with sungod *Sol Invictus* ("unconquered sun"). In the words of the well-known U.S. Unitarian preacher A. Powell Davies (*The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1960): "What the layman does not

know, and the scholar does, is that there were many Pagan deities during the time of Jesus and afterwards for whom quite similar claims were made and in whose names were preached quite similar doctrines. Mithras was a Redeemer of mankind; so were Tammuz [an Assyrian god], Adonis and Osiris. The view eventually taken of Jesus as a Redeemer was not a Judaic concept; nor was it held by the first Christians in Palestine. ... It was when Christianity spread out into the Pagan world that the idea of Jesus as a Savior God emerged. This idea was patterned on those already existing, especially upon Mithras. It was the birthday of Mithras, the 25th of December (the winter

solstice), that was taken over by the Pagan Christians to be the birthday of Jesus. Even the Sabbath, the Jewish seventh day appointed by God in the Mosaic Law and hallowed by his own resting on this day after the work of Creation, had to be abandoned in favor of the Mithraic first day, the Day of the Conquering Sun [i.e., Sunday]."

Powell Davies goes on, drawing parallels between the Virgin Mother and the cult of Mother Earth. He adds, "The cave, later to be associated with the birth of Jesus, was earlier the birth-place of [Egyptian god] Horus, who, when he was grown, would become Osiris, who must die for the salvation of his people. Isis was the *Mater Dolorosa*. There were innumerable such salvation cults.... In these cults were found the same sacraments later to be called Christian. The Last Supper (Eucharist) belonged to Mithraism, from whence it was borrowed to combine with the sacred meal of Palestinian Christianity.... The extent of the indebtedness of Christianity to Pagan religion is so great that, provided there was a Judaic-Christian nucleus at all, very little indeed need have been supplied by the Palestinian Christians...."

A second source generously drawn upon is now traced to the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947 in a series of caves overlooking the Dead Sea. Written by a Jewish sect during the first century BC and the first century AD, the scrolls speak of a Messiah and a Teacher who will be put to death. According to John Allegro (The Dead Sea Scrolls: a Reappraisal, 1964), they "give added ground for believing that many incidents [of the New Testament] are merely projections into Jesus' own history of what was expected of the Messiah." Powell Davies adds: "What we know now ... is that a sect existed in the centuries just before the emergence of Christianity which was organized in ways that suggest a relationship to the early Christian churches; that this community had scriptures upon which Christian writers drew in composing their own scriptures; that there were practices, including sacraments, which foreshadow Christian practices; that there was an expectation of a Messiah to whom the sect looked forward, and a Teacher, probably martyred, to whom the sect looked back, just as in both cases the Christians did. There are many further similarities." It follows that scholars have "known all along that historically, Christianity is not the religion founded by Jesus and spread abroad by his disciples. But the layman has not known it. The discovery of the Scrolls has somehow made him sense it." Unsurprisingly, there followed a decadeslong attempt by a small team of biblical scholars to stifle the publication of the scrolls and to deny other scholars access to them; their monopoly finally collapsed when Prof. Robert Eisenman published the entire collection in 1991. According to Eisenman and Michael Wise (Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered, 1992), the authors of the scrolls reveal "nothing less than a picture of the movement from which Christianity sprang in Palestine." This, of course, is not acceptable to the orthodox view.

Buddhism undoubtedly contributed another major stream to the early Christian legends, parables, and concepts. This is natural, considering that Buddhist preachers were present in the Mediterranean region from the time of Ashoka onward, and direct contacts between India and Greece were not infrequent. In Two Masters, One Message (1978), the U.S. scholar of religion, Roy C. Amore finds that "the Buddhist ideal of nonviolence, the concept of treasures in heaven, the quest for a pure mind, and other Buddhist teachings came into the Christian tradition. In his last years Jesus lived a life like that of a Buddhist wandering teacher. He travelled from village to village, performed miracles, taught in similes, and gathered about him a group of men dedicated to the same cause. ... The Buddhist presence continued after Jesus' death and influenced some of the early Christian communities to interpret the career of Jesus along the lines of a god-come-down (avatar). The doctrines of the preexistence of Jesus, the stories about his birth and infancy, and the belief in his return to heaven followed the Buddhist model. This avatar pattern was combined with other interpretations of Jesus derived from Jewish expectations: Messiah, Son of man, Descendant of David, and so forth. I suggest that the Buddhist avatar model helped Christianity transform the Jewish messiah concept into a savior figure that was understandable to the gentiles."

The twin impact of Buddhism and Hinduism is even more visible in the Gnostic Gospels, whose manuscripts were rediscovered in a jar at Nag-Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945. This was a "rediscovery" in the sense that their existence had long been known through extracts quoted by Church leaders who, right from the second century AD, sought to destroy these very different versions of Jesus' teachings, portraying them as dangerous heresy. Why were those texts - among them the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Truth - perceived as a threat to the nascent orthodoxy? Because they laid much less emphasis on Jesus' life than on the necessity of inner transformation. In the words of U.S. scholar Elaine Pagels (The Gnostic Gospels, 1979), "Orthodox Jews and Christians insist that a chasm separates humanity from its creator: God is wholly other. But some of the Gnostics who wrote these gospels contradict this: self-knowledge is knowledge of God; the self and the divine are identical." (Gnosis means knowledge in Greek.) We read, for instance, in the words of Jesus, "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you." This suggests that we are ourselves the agents of our own salvation or destruction, and not an only son of God in whom we have to blindly believe.

Such a language will hardly surprise a Hindu, and scholars have often argued that Hindu and Buddhist teachings could have influenced gnosticism. Thus "Gnostic Christians undoubtedly expressed ideas that the orthodox abhorred. For example, some of these Gnostic texts question whether all suffering, labor, and death derive from human sin, which, in the orthodox version, marred an originally perfect creation. Others

speak of the feminine element in the divine, celebrating God as Father and Mother. Still others suggest that Christ's resurrection is to be understood symbolically, not literally. A few radical texts even denounce catholic Christians themselves as heretics, who, although they 'do not understand mystery ... boast that the mystery of truth belongs to them alone'."

Had the Christian Gnostic belief system prevailed rather than the rigid and exclusivist dogmas that came to be known as "Christianity," the history of the world would have been very different.



# EARLY CHRISTIAN DESTRUCTION OF PAGAN CULTURES

### Vlasis Rassias\*

Although Christianity claims to preach love and brotherhood, its actual history reflects very little of either. Once the nascent creed established itself, one of its first tasks was to eradicate every other culture and religion standing in its way, especially of the Gentile sort, i.e. heathen or pagan. An awareness of this historical development is essential to counter the popular view, assiduously nourished by Christian churches, that early Christianity arose out of the sacrifice of numerous "martyrs" tortured by cruel Pagans. While a few early Christians, often calling for the destruction of Pagan cults and culture, were indeed executed by Roman authorities, scholars today agree that many of the so-called martyrdoms receive no historical corroboration and may be later constructions. On the other hand, no one who studies history objectively can deny that Pagans as well as "heretical" Christians were persecuted and murdered in far greater numbers at the behest of the growing church.

The following list of a few such landmarks was prepared by the Greek thinker and author Vlasis Rassias. Since the mid-1980s, he has "focused on the living, threatened or

<sup>\*</sup>This chronology is reproduced from Es Edafos Ferein... (To demolish them...) (Athens: Anichti Poli Editions, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2000). Among Vlasis Rassias's other titles, we may mention A History of Love: the History of the Christian Predominance, in five volumes; the first three, coming up to AD 1300, have been published (Athens: Anichti Poli Editions, 2005); vols. 4 & 5 are under preparation. See www.rassias.gr for further details. (Eds.)

extinct polytheistic ethnic religions of the globe with special focus on the pre-Christian Hellenic [i.e., ancient Greek] tradition." This chronology, reproduced with his permission, is extracted from his book Demolish Them; it covers much of the first millennium AD.

314 – Immediately after its full legalization, the Christian Church attacks the Gentiles: The Council of Ancyra [modern Ankara] denounces the worship of Goddess Artemis.

324 – Emperor Constantine declares Christianity as the only official religion of the Roman Empire. At Didyma, Asia Minor, he sacks the Oracle of God Apollo and tortures its Pagan priests to death. He also evicts the Gentiles from Mt. Athos and destroys all local Hellenic temples.

326 – Emperor Constantine, following the instructions of his mother Helen, destroys the temple of God Asclepius in Aigeai of Cilicia [in southern Anatolia] and many temples of Goddess Aphrodite in Jerusalem, Aphaca, Mambre, Phoenice, Baalbek, etc.

330 – Constantine steals the treasures and statues of Pagan temples in Greece to decorate Nova Roma (Constantinople), the new capital of his Empire.

335 – Constantine sacks many Pagan temples of Asia Minor and Palestine and orders the execution by crucifixion of "all magicians and soothsayers." Martyrdom of the Neoplatonist philosopher Sopatros.

341 – Emperor Constans I [youngest son of Constantine and Roman emperor from 337 to 350], persecutes "all the sooth-sayers and the Hellenists." Many Gentile Hellenes are either imprisoned or executed.

346 – New large-scale persecutions against the Gentiles in Constantinople. Banishment of the famous orator Libanius accused of being a "magician."

353 – An edict of Constantius [third son of Constantine, emperor from 353 to 361] orders the death penalty for all kind of worship through sacrifices and "idols."

354 – A new edict of Constantius orders the closing of all Pagan temples. Some of them are profaned and turned into brothels or gambling rooms. Executions of Pagan priests. First burning of libraries in various cities of the Empire. The first lime factories are built next to closed Pagan temples. A large part of sacred Gentile architecture is turned into lime. 356 – A new edict of Constantius orders the destruction of the Pagan temples and the execution of all "idolaters."

357 – Constantius outlaws all methods of divination (astrology not excluded).

359 – In Skythopolis, Syria, Christians organise the first death camps for the torture and execution of arrested Gentiles from all around the Empire.



Emperor Julian

361 to 363 – Religious tolerance and restoration of Pagan cults declared in Constantinople (11<sup>th</sup> December 361) by the Pagan Roman emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus [better known as Julian, a nephew of Constantine, who died during a military campaign to Persia].

364 – Emperor Flavius Jovianus [Jovian] orders the burning of the library of Antioch. An Imperial edict (11<sup>th</sup> September) orders the death penalty for all Gentiles that

worship their ancestral Gods or practice divination ("sileat omnibus perpetuo divinandi uriositas"). Three different edicts (4<sup>th</sup> February, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 23<sup>rd</sup> December) order the confiscation of all properties of Pagan temples and the death penalty for participation in Pagan rituals, even private ones. 365 – An Imperial edict (17<sup>th</sup> November) forbids Gentile officers of the army to command Christian soldiers.

370 – Emperor Valens orders a tremendous persecution of Gentiles throughout the Eastern Empire. In Antioch, among

many other Pagans, the ex-governor Fidustius and the priests Hilarius and Patricius are executed. Tons of books are burnt in the squares of cities of the Eastern Empire. All friends of Julian are persecuted (Orebasius, Sallustius, Pegasius etc.), the philosopher Simonides is burned alive and the philosopher Maximus is decapitated.

372 – Emperor Valens orders the governor of Asia Minor to exterminate the Hellenes and all documents of their wisdom. 373 – New prohibition of all methods of divination. The term "Pagan" (pagani, villagers) is introduced by the Christians to lessen the Gentiles.

375 – The temple of God Asclepius in Epidaurus, Greece, is closed down.

380 - On 27th February, Christianity becomes the exclusive religion of the Roman Empire by an edict of Emperor Flavius Theodosius, requiring that "all the various nations, which are subject to our clemency and moderation should continue in the profession of that religion, which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter." Non-Christians are called "loathsome, heretics, stupid and blind." In another edict Theodosius calls "insane" those that do not believe in the Christian god and outlaws all disagreements with the Church dogmas. Ambrosius, bishop of Milan, starts destroying all the Pagan temples of his area. Christian priests lead the mob against the temple of Goddess Demeter in Eleusis and try to lynch the hierophants Nestorius and Priskus. The 95-year-old hierophant Nestorius, ends the Eleusinian Mysteries and announces the predominance of mental darkness over the human race.

381 – On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, Theodosius deprives all rights of Christians that return to the Pagan religion. Throughout the Eastern empire, Pagan temples and libraries are looted or burned down. On 21<sup>st</sup> December, Theodosius outlaws even simple visits to the temples of the Hellenes. In Constantinople, the temple of Goddess Aphrodite is turned into a brothel and the temples of Sun and Artemis into stables.

382 – "Hallelujah" (Glory to Yahweh) is imposed in the Christian mass.

384 – Emperor Theodosius orders the Praetorian Prefect, Maternus Cynegius, a dedicated Christian, to cooperate with the local bishops and destroy the temples of the Gentiles in Northern Greece and Asia Minor.

385 to 388 – Maternus Cynegius, encouraged by his fanatic wife, and bishop, "Saint" Marcellus, with his gangs scour the countryside, sack and destroy hundreds of Hellenic temples, shrines and altars. Amongst others they destroy the temple of Edessa, the Cabeireion of Imbros, the temple of Zeus in Apamea, the temple of Apollo in Didyma and all the temples of Palmyra. Thousands of innocent Gentiles from all sides of the Empire suffer martyrdom in the notorious death camps of Skythopolis.

386 – Emperor Theodosius outlaws (16<sup>th</sup> June) the care of sacked Pagan temples.

388 – Public talks on religious subjects are also outlawed by Theodosius. The old orator Libanius sends his famous Epistle "Pro Templis" to Theodosius, with a hope that the few remaining Hellenic temples will be respected and spared.

389 to 390 – All non-Christian calendars are outlawed. Hordes of fanatic hermits from the desert flood into Middle Eastern and Egyptian cities, destroying statues, altars, libraries and Pagan temples, whilst Gentiles are lynched. Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, starts heavy persecutions against the Gentiles, turns the temple of Dionysos into a church, burns down the Mithraeum\* of the city, destroys the temple of Zeus and burlesques the Pagan priests before they are killed by stoning. The Christian mob profanes the cult images.

391 – On 24<sup>th</sup> February, a new edict of Theodosius prohibits not only visits to Pagan temples but also looking at vandalised statues. New heavy persecutions all around the Empire. In

<sup>\*</sup> Mithraeums were underground or cave temples where the Roman sun-god Mithras was worshipped (Eds.).

Alexandria, Egypt, the Gentiles, led by the philosopher Olympius, revolt and after some street fights, finally lock themselves inside the fortified temple of God Serapis (the Serapeion). After a violent siege, the Christians occupy the building, demolish it, burn its famous library and profane the cult images.

392 – On 8<sup>th</sup> November, the Emperor Theodosius outlaws all non-Christian rituals and names them "superstitions of the Gentiles" ("gentilicia superstitio"). New full scale persecutions against the Gentiles. The Mysteries of Samothrace are ended and priests slaughtered. In Cyprus the local bishop, "Saints" Epiphanius and Tychon destroy almost all the temples of the island and exterminate thousands of Gentiles. The local Mysteries of Goddess Aphrodite are ended. Theodosius' edict declares: "the ones that won't obey pater Epiphanius have no right to keep living on the island." The Gentiles revolt against the Emperor and the Church in Petra, Aeropolis, Rafia, Gaza, Baalbek and other cities of the Middle East.

393 – The Pythian, Aktia and Olympic Games are outlawed as part of the Hellenic "idolatry." Christians sack the temples of Olympia.

395 – Two new edicts (22<sup>nd</sup> July and 7<sup>th</sup> August) lead to new persecutions against the Gentiles. Rufinus, the eunuch Prime Minister of Emperor Flavius Arcadius directs the hordes of the baptised Goths (led by Alaric) to the country of the Hellenes. Encouraged by Christian monks, the barbarians sack and burn many cities (Dion, Delphi, Megara, Corinth, Pheneos, Argos, Nemea, Lycosoura, Sparta, Messene, Phigaleia, Olympia, etc.), slaughter or enslave innumerable Hellenes and burn the temples. Among others, they burn down the Eleusinian Sanctuary and burn alive all of its priests (including the hierophant of Mithras Hilarius).

396 – On 7<sup>th</sup> December, a new edict by Emperor Arcadius orders that Paganism be treated as high treason. Imprisonment of the few remaining Pagan priests and hierophants. 397 – "Demolish them!" Emperor Flavius Arcadius orders all the still erect Pagan temples demolished.

398 – The Fourth Church Council of Carthage prohibits to all, including its bishops, the study of Gentile books. Porphyrius, bishop of Gaza, demolishes almost all the Pagan temples of his city (except nine of them that remain active).

399 – With a new edict (13<sup>th</sup> July) Emperor Flavius Arcadius orders all remaining temples, mainly in the countryside, to be immediately demolished: "Si qua in agris templa sunt, sine turba ac tumultu diruantur. His enim deiectis atque sublatis omnis superstitioni materia consumetur."

400 – Bishop Nicetas destroys the Oracle of God Dionysus in Vesai and baptises all the Gentiles of this area.

401 – The Christian mob of Carthage lynches Gentiles and destroys temples and "idols." In Gaza too, the local bishop, also a "Saint," Porphyrius sends his followers to lynch Gentiles and demolish the remaining nine still active temples of the city. The 15<sup>th</sup> Council of Chalkedon orders all Christians that still keep good relations with their gentile relatives to be excommunicated (even after their death).

405 – John Chrysostom sends his hordes of grey-clad monks armed with clubs and iron bars to destroy the "idols" in all the cities of Palestine.

406 – John Chrysostom collects funds from rich Christian women to financially support the demolition of the Hellenic temples. In Ephesus, he orders the destruction of the famous temple of Goddess Artemis. In Salamis, Cyprus, "Saints" Epiphanius and Eutychius continue persecutions of the Gentiles and the total destruction of their temples and sanctuaries.

407 – A new edict outlaws once more all non-Christian acts of worship.

408 – The Emperor of the Western Empire Honorius and the Emperor of the Eastern Empire Arcadius, order together that all sculptures of the Pagan temples be either destroyed or confiscated. Private ownership of Pagan sculpture is also outlawed. The local bishops lead new heavy persecutions against Gentiles and new book burning. Judges showing pity for Gentiles are also persecuted.

409 – Once again, an edict orders astrology and all methods of divination to be punished by death.

415 – In Alexandria, Egypt, the mob urged by bishop Cyril, attacks a few days before the Judeo-Christian Pascha (Pesach-Easter) and hacks to pieces the famous and beautiful philosopher Hypatia. Pieces of her body are paraded by the Christian mob through the streets of Alexandria, and are finally burned together with her books in a place called Cynaron. On 30<sup>th</sup> August, new persecutions start against all the Pagan priests of North Africa, who end their lives either crucified or burned alive.

416 – The inquisitor Hypatius, alias "The Sword of God," exterminates the last Gentiles of Bithynia. In Constantinople (7<sup>th</sup> December), all non-Christian army officers, public employees and judges are dismissed.

423 – Emperor Theodosius II, declares (8<sup>th</sup> June) that the religion of the Gentiles is nothing more than "demon worship" and orders all those who persist in practising it to be punished by imprisonment and tortured.

429 – The temple of Goddess Athena (Parthenon) on the Acropolis of Athens is sacked. Athenian Pagans are persecuted.

435 – On 14<sup>th</sup> November, a new edict by Theodosius II orders the death penalty for all "heretics" and "pagans" of the Empire. Only Judaism is considered a legal non-Christian Religion.

438 – Theodosius II issues an new edict (31st January) against the Gentiles, incriminating their "idolatry" as the reason for a recent ... plague!

440 to 450 – The Christians demolish all the monuments, altars and temples of Athens, Olympia, and other Greek cities.

448 - Theodosius II orders all non-Christian books burned.

450 – All the temples of Aphrodisias (City of Goddess Aphrodite) are demolished and its libraries burned down. The city is renamed Stauroupolis (City of the Cross).

451 – A new edict by Valentinianus and Marcianus (4<sup>th</sup> November) emphasises that "idolatry" is to be punished by death.

457 to 491 – Sporadic persecutions against Gentiles of the Eastern Empire. Among others, the physician Jacobus and the philosopher Gessius are executed. Severianus, Herestios, Zosimus, Isidorus and others are tortured and imprisoned. The proselytiser Conon and his followers exterminate the last Gentiles of the island of Imbros, in the northeast Aegean. The last worshippers of Lavranius Zeus are exterminated in Cyprus. 482 to 488 – The majority of the Gentiles of Asia Minor are exterminated, after a desperate revolt against the Emperor and the Church.

486 – More "underground" Pagan priests are discovered, arrested, burlesqued, tortured and executed in Alexandria, Egypt.

515 – Baptism becomes obligatory, even for those that already say they are Christian. The Emperor of Constantinople, Anastasius orders the massacre of the Gentiles in the Arabian city Zoara and the demolition of the temple of local God Theandrites.

528 – Emperor Jutprada (Justinianus) outlaws the "alternative" Olympian Games of Antioch. He also orders the execution (by fire, crucifixion, tearing to pieces by wild beasts, or cutting by iron nails) of all who practice "sorcery, divination, magic or idolatry" and prohibits all teachings by the Gentiles ("the ones suffering from the blasphemous insanity of the Hellenes"). 529 – Emperor Justinianus outlaws the Athenian Philosophical Academy, which has its property confiscated.

532 – The inquisitor Ioannis Asiacus, a fanatical monk, leads a crusade against the Gentiles of Asia Minor.

542 – Emperor Justinianus allows the inquisitor Ioannis Asiacus to convert the Gentiles of Phrygia, Caria and Lydia in Asia Minor. Within 35 years of this crusade, 99 churches and 12 monasteries are built on the sites of demolished Pagan temples.

546 – Hundreds of Gentiles are put to death in Constantinople by the inquisitor Ioannis Asiacus.

556 - Justinianus orders the notorious inquisitor Amantius

to go to Antioch, to find, arrest, torture and exterminate the last Gentiles of the city and burn all the private libraries down. 562 – Mass arrests, burlesquing, tortures, imprisonments and executions of Gentile Hellenes in Athens, Antioch, Palmyra and Constantinople.

578 to 582 – Christians torture and crucify Gentile Hellenes all around the Eastern Empire, and exterminate the last Gentiles of Heliopolis (Baalbek).

580 – Christian inquisitors attack a secret temple of Zeus in Antioch. The priest commits suicide, but the other Gentiles are arrested. All the prisoners, the Vice Governor Anatolius included, are tortured and sent to Constantinople to face trial. Sentenced to death they are thrown to the lions. The wild animals are unwilling to tear them to pieces and they end up crucified. Their corpses are dragged through the streets by the Christian mob and afterwards thrown unburied in the city dump.

583 – New persecutions against the Gentile Hellenes by the Emperor Mauricius.

590 – Throughout the Eastern Empire, Christian accusers "discover" Pagan conspiracies. A new wave of torture and executions erupts.

692 – The "Penthekte" Council of Constantinople prohibits the remains of Calends, Brumalia, Anthesteria, and other Pagan / Dionysian festivals.

804 – The Gentile Hellenes of Laconia, Greece, resist successfully the attempt of Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, to convert them to Christianity.

950 to 988 – Violent conversion of the last Gentile Hellenes of Laconia by the Armenian "Saint" Nikon.

80 CB

"The ancient Greeks who were the first teachers of European civilisation attained the zenith of their culture long before the Christians. Ever since they became Christians, all their learning and culture was extinguished."

> Swami Vivekananda Complete Works (1990), VII.362

"The Greeks had more light than the Christians who converted them... The Christians brought darkness rather than light. That has always been the case with aggressive religions — they tend to overrun the earth. Hinduism on the other hand is passive and therein lies its danger...."

Sri Aurobindo Evening Talks, August 8, 1926

### A Hindu Community in Ancient Armenia

In the second century BC, a Hindu community settled in Armenia (which then included a part of Turkey and a part or Iran) led by two Indian princes from Kannauj who had been driven out of India for attempting to overthrow their father, the king. That is what the Syrian historian Zenob Glak narrates, writing almost five hundred years later in his *History of Taron*, then an important province in Armenia.

The princes, Gissaneh or Kissaneh (Krishna?) and Demeter (Jagannath?), were given some land in Taron and built a city called Veeshap, but after getting embroiled in local rivalries, they were put to death. Their three sons were however allowed to rule over the region, and built three towns; later they established Kharki, a city in north-west Armenia, where they erected two temples named after their deified fathers; the statues of the gods were made of brass and very tall (18 and 22 feet according to Zenob).

The Hindu community prospered for four centuries, with twenty more towns built in the following decades. (Among other historical traces of their presence, one village in Taron retained the name "Hindkastan" until the early twentieth century; Vahagen, an Armenian fire god, probably derives from Agni.) Then Armenia was evangelized by "Saint" Gregory the Illuminator; in the words of scholar Eddie Arnavoudian, "To permanently subdue its newly conquered population, the Church, like colonial powers in all ages, set out to destroy the intellectual and cultural heritage of pre-Christian Armenia so as to annihilate its historically developed independent national identity. As a final mark of arrogance it built its own Churches on 'the very ground and with the very same masonry as that of the pagan temples' it destroyed, copying even their architecture."

In AD 301, the Hindu pocket was attacked; the head priest, Artzan (Arjun?), and his son Demeter offered brave resistance; Artzan soon succumbed, along with 1,038 Hindus. When Demeter was felled after a heroic fight, the clash was called off.

Gregory then ordered the destruction of the "idol" of Kissaneh, even as the Hindus continue to fight. Six priests were killed on the spot. "This spot," writes Zenob, "was the gate of demons, whose number was as large at Kissaneh as in the depths of hell. ... The following day, a pagan priest was brought to the Prince of Sewnia [one of Gregory's escorts]. He was pressed to reveal the place where the treasures were hidden; he refused and died on the gibbet in torture. It has been impossible to discover the treasures since." The temples were demolished and a monument erected to celebrate the victory. Zenob concludes his account of the battle with these words: "Monuments were then raised over their graves bearing the following inscription, in Syrian, Hellenic and Ismaelitish characters: 'The first battle which was fought very fiercely. Artzan the head priest, the chief commander of the battle lies interred here, and with him one thousand and thirty-eight men. We waged this war on account of the idol Gisaneh and on behalf of Christ."

Some 5,000 Hindus were later baptized, with the priests ordered to cut their hair, which they had been keeping long as "Gissaneh had long flowing hair." But, notes Zenob, the converts were far from perfect in their new faith.

That was possibly the first encounter between Hinduism and Christianity.

CB

## A DISASTER IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND

# Interview of Swami Devananda Saraswati by Rajeev Srinivasan\*

Swami Devananda Saraswati is a Hindu monk of Canadian birth.\*\* His wide-ranging interview, excerpts of which are presented here, was conducted on August 26, 2001, and revised on January 26, 2003. Swami Devananda's main point is that the history of Christianity, especially in India, is a combination of fabrication — of which the myth of Saint Thomas's coming to India is the most telling example — and suppression.

(Rajeev Srinivasan:) Can you tell me a little about your background? How long have you been in India? What prompted you to become a monk?

(Swami Devananda Saraswati:) I was brought up in the foothills of western Canada. My family was middle class and God-fearing and I was fed from birth on the strong meat of the Old Testament prophets. But in my early teens it was discovered that I did not love Jesus and was not afraid of Jehovah. I was excommunicated from my father's small Protestant church. It was a very liberating experience and I left home soon afterward.

<sup>\*</sup> Rajeev Srinivasan is a noted columnist and a commentator on Hindu causes. (The title, drawn from the interview, is ours.) (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup>Under the pen name Ishwar Sharan, Swami Devananda published The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995). (Eds.)

I began to read Buddhism and existential philosophy. Perhaps as a legacy of my early years, I retained an avid interest in Christian history. I read Gore Vidal's book *Julian* about the last pagan emperor of Rome. Julian became my hero along with Alexander the Great. Julian was the great ascetic and Alexander the great king and traveller. I followed in Alexander's footsteps, visiting as nearly as possible every place that he had visited.

I reached India in 1967 and immediately fell in love with Hindu civilization. It is the best civilization of the Great Mother Goddess. She is called Asherah in the Bible and the prophets are always cursing Her. As a small child I had seen Her once in a garden, and later I had read about Her in the Golden Bough. She has always cared for me, and like the great guru Shankara I believe that She is the liberator of man and the revealer of truth. I became a sannyasi because of Her. It is a sacrifice of love that I am still trying to perfect.

What was your objective in writing The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple? You are quite critical of the Christian establishment and their fellow travellers in the Indian media.

Most historians will tell you that St. Peter never went to Rome and did not establish a Christian church there. Yet the very authority of the papacy rests on this fiction and most educated people accept their claim. I was interested in the Indian parallel, in seeing what the historians had to say about the coming of St. Thomas to India and his establishing a church in Kerala. I soon discovered that the most reputed historians of Christianity including Eusebius, von Harnack, de Tillemont, Latourette, Winternitz and Bishop Stephen Neill, all denied the coming of St. Thomas to India. Some denied his very existence.

In writing The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple (which I did under the 'secular' pen name Ishwar Sharan), I also wanted to show that there was a carefully

orchestrated cover-up in the Indian English-language media regarding the St. Thomas story. Indeed, even after two editions of the book, *The Indian Express* and *The New Indian Express* remain the main purveyors of the fable through editorials and their columnists A. J. Philip and Renuka Narayanan. Little leftist magazines like *The Indian Review of Books*, edited by the St. Thomas advocate S. Muthiah, also put in a good word for St. Thomas when the opportunity arises. This is their unprofessional response to the exposure of a fraud that does not serve their financial interests.

Yet in writing the book and giving the source material for the legend, the third-century Syrian religious romance called the *Acts of Thomas*, my sincere hope was that Indian scholars would take up the study of the legend seriously. But this has not happened. Indian historians with their Marxist bent of mind are not willing to touch it. They are afraid for their tenures and their politically correct professional reputations. For the English-language newspaper editors, all of them brown sahibs with brown noses, the St. Thomas fable is a useful stick to bash Hindus with when the occasion arises, as the story is a vicious blood libel against the Hindu community.

You allege that there is, in effect, a conspiracy of silence to hide a lot of uncomfortable facts about Christianity in India. Why?

The establishment of the Christian church in India was intrinsically part of the European colonial enterprise. Its history is shocking for its violence and duplicity. Read the letters of St. Francis Xavier or the diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai.

The Indian church today is not so much different from the original seventeenth-century church. It is very wealthy and corrupt and politically ambitious. But it has learned the propaganda value of social service and is making a great effort to disassociate itself from its colonial origins. This involves a lot of deceit, of course, and a massive cover-up of past deeds. But as the late Archbishop Arulappa of Madras would say,

the end justifies the means — even if that is not exactly what Jesus taught.

The Christian church uses the St. Thomas legend to claim a first-century origin for Christianity in India. It also claims St. Thomas to be a martyr at the hands of a wicked Hindu priest and king. Better still, Christianity becomes the "original" Indian religion, as it would be older than many of the sectarian Hindu cults practised in the country today.

The whole idea is a gross perversion of truth and a grave injustice to the Hindu community that has offered refuge to persecuted Christian refugees down through the ages. It is Hindus who have been martyred by these same Christian refugees starting in the eighth and ninth centuries when Syrian and Persian immigrants in Malabar destroyed temples to build their St. Thomas churches. It is Hindus who were martyred in Goa by Catholic inquisitors and in Madras by Jesuit, Franciscan, and Dominican priests who operated under the protection of the Portuguese. And it is Hindus who are martyred today by the Christian churches and the secular press who support them, including the BBC—all of whom have mounted a base campaign of vilification and calumny against Hindu religion and society.

You make the startling revelation that the fondly believed story of St. Thomas, an apostle of Christ, coming to India and establishing an Indian church, is a convenient fiction. What was the original rationale for this story? Who propagated it? What has been the consequence?

The original rationale for the St. Thomas story was to give the first fourth-century Christian immigrants in Malabar a local patron saint. The story also gave them caste status that was important in integrating them into Hindu society. There is nothing unusual in a refugee community creating this kind of mythology of identity and it is part of the process of getting established in a new land.

The St. Thomas legend, which they brought with them from Syria, was easy enough to adapt to India. St. Thomas was already the patron saint of "India," "India" being not the subcontinent that we know but a synonym for Asia and all those lands that lay east of the Roman Empire's borders. "India" even included Egypt and Ethiopia in some geographies, and China and Japan in others.

The Syrian Christian refugees had been led to India by a merchant who is known to history as Thomas of Cana, i.e. Canaan, but is also known as Thomas of Jerusalem. Over time it was natural enough for the Syrian Christian community to identify their first-century patron saint Thomas the Apostle with their fourth-century leader Thomas of Cana. As a result of this process it is now mistakenly accepted by most educated Indians that St. Thomas came to India in 52 CE and established a Christian church at Cranganore in Kerala.

The great Kapaleeswar Temple in Mylapore, Madras, was demolished, according to you, and that is where the San Thome Cathedral now stands. This is news to many people who believe temple demolition was largely a Muslim act.

The evidence for the demolition of the original Kapaleeswar Temple is according to a variety of sources including government records and archaeological reports. There is the presence of temple rubble in the San Thome Cathedral walls and in the grounds of Bishop's House (removed since my book's publication). The news of the demolition of the original temple was not news to anybody of a past generation and was discussed in the Madras newspapers during British times. The origins of the present Kapaleeswar Temple are recorded and directly reflect and confirm the destruction of the original temple.

It is true that Hindus do not associate temple-breaking with Christians. That is due to the success of the historical coverup of which the A.S.I. [Archaeological Survey of India] and the state archaeological departments are partly responsible.

But we in the West know better about Christian history and have access to a vast stock of published material that is not usually available in India. We know that every great pagan temple in Europe and the Mediterranean basin was destroyed and replaced with a church after Christianity gained political ascendancy in the Roman Empire. We also know that it is not any different in India today where Christian missionaries hold sway in remote tribal areas, because we have seen the evidence.

In Central India, Orissa, the Northeast, even Arunachal Pradesh and Nepal where missionaries cannot officially operate, village temples are demolished and sacred images broken by new converts. The video films of these "good works" are then shown on TV in Europe where missionaries go to collect funds for their evangelizing effort.

Temple breaking in India seems to have originated in the eighth or ninth century with Nestorian Christian immigrants from Persia. They built churches on the temple foundations and then attributed the temple breaking to St. Thomas himself by claiming he built the churches in the first century. Franciscan, Dominican, and Jesuit priests destroyed temples in Goa, Malabar, and Tamil Nadu in the sixteenth century. St. Francis Xavier left a fascinating written record of his temple-breaking work on the Coromandel Coast. The Portuguese entombed the Vel Ilang Kanni Amman Temple near Nagapattinam and turned it into the famous Velankanni church called Our Lady of Health Basilica. The Jesuits destroyed the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple in Pondicherry and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception now sits on the site. The list is very long. Christians were destroying temples long before the Muslims got into the act.

I have heard some Christians say that they believe that the Bhakti movement in Tamil lands was influenced by Christian ideas of a personal god. How do you respond? Christian missionaries and Marxist intellectuals have a mantra: There is nothing Hindu in Hindustan and nothing Indian in India. According to them everything of value in Indian civilization came from outside, from someplace beyond the pale of Sindh. They are aware of the Hindu's low self-esteem and seek to undermine it further.

Be that as it may. Devotion to a personal god is there in the Rig Veda itself: "Oh, Agni, be easy of access to us, as a father to a son." Dr. Pandharinath Prabhu tells us in his much-acclaimed book *Hindu Social Organisation* that the very term bhakti first appears in the Svetasvataropanishad. Bhakti is there in the Puranas and finds its best expression in the Bhagavad Gita; a better expression, I must say, than is found anywhere in the Bible. Tamil bhakti has its roots in the Tirumantiram, ca. 200 BCE.

So there is no influence from Christianity at all. But even if it was true that Christianity influenced Hindu concepts of a personal god, what do Christians gain by making such a claim? Hindu bhaktas direct their love and devotion to Shiva and Murugan, Vishnu, Krishna and Rama, not to Jesus. Jesus has failed in India! And failed and failed again in India!

There appears to be an effort on the part of certain Christian groups to "indianize" the church: for instance, they have created a cult of the Infant Jesus to compete with the worship of the Baby Krishna, and a cult of the Madonna to compete with the worship of the Mother Goddess. Is this a genuine effort at cultural synthesis?

The Pope has made it absolutely clear in the Vatican document called *Dominus Jesus* that enculturation and indigenization are the means by which the Indian heathen is to be evangelized. Enculturation is not an effort at cultural synthesis but a means of conversion. Its object is to undermine the integrity of Hindu religion and culture and subsume it into Christianity. It is a tried and true method. It is by this method

that Christian missionaries starting with St. Paul undermined Greek and Roman religion and culture and took it over for themselves.

Christianity is a simple personality cult with an elitist ideology. It can be insinuated into any open society. It is parasitical in nature and feeds on the spiritual and cultural body of the society it invades. In the process it destroys the invaded culture and absorbs it into itself. This is what happened in Pagan Europe.

Hindus do not understand this process because Hinduism is spiritually self-sufficient and does not require outside nourishment. At the same time Hindus are flattered by the attention given to their religion and culture by Christian operators and are vulnerable to their overtures. See my dialogue with Fr. Bede Griffiths in Sita Ram Goel's book *Catholic Ashrams* concerning this important subject.

Some Christians have written to me quoting various Sanskrit texts to "prove" that they foreshadow the arrival of Jesus Christ. What do you think of this?

Prophecy is the last refuge of the religious scoundrel and unfortunately the Indian missionary community is made up entirely of scoundrels. They can find and foreshadow whatever they like in scripture (be it Hindu, Muslim or Christian) because of scripture's obscure language and context and the poet's use of allegory and metaphor. For example, Bible scholars know that the Old Testament "prophecies" concerning Jesus's birth are forced contrivances of interpretation and editing used to give Jesus divine legitimacy and royal linage. They know that these prophecies are false but because they appeal to the believer's imagination and reason and help inculcate faith in Jesus, they continue to be quoted as divinely inspired and true.

In India a favourite method of foreshadowing from Vedic texts is closely related to the enculturation process. Christian preachers simply appropriate the meaning of Sanskrit terms and claim them for Jesus. They argue in a round about way that terms like Isha, Ishwara and Parameswara only ever referred to Jesus in the first place! I have got letters from Baptist converts who claim that Prajapati is really Jehovah!

If Christian missionaries want to find Jesus in the Veda and Christ in India they can do so with the help of clever and amoral scholars like Fr. Raimundo Panikker. He and they should carefully consider that these "inspired" claims, and, indeed, the inducement to convert by means of these claims are a sin against the Holy Spirit. According to their own doctrine, there is no forgiveness for a sin against the Holy Spirit. But the real problem is not that Christian religious entrepreneurs invent prophecies and manipulate the meaning of Sanskrit texts, the real problem is that Hindus accept their claims at face value and do not know how to reply.

People who follow prophets invariably become idolaters of The Word. They believe that the prophet's word is divine word, that a man's word is God's word. It is the worst kind of idolatry and leads to the religious fundamentalism and violence that we are witness to today throughout the world.

If you criticize Christians in any way, their immediate response is. "We are a tiny minority of two per cent of India's population, and see how much social work we are doing." How do you respond to this?

The question of numbers of population, which for Christians is something like three per cent, is very misleading. Not long ago India's millions were ruled by a cadre of 30,000 Christian foreigners. It is not a question of numbers but of institutional wealth and influence, of organization, political ambition and high ideological motivation, and, especially, of undue control of institutions like education and health care that counts. And then there are the special constitutional privileges for minorities that make Hindus second-class citizens in their own land, and the uncritical sympathy for all things Christian in the English-language press.

It is an absurd situation. No country in the world allows a minority community to dictate to the majority the way India does, or to allow a foreign-trained minority community to proselytize in a society that has never proselytized and cannot protect itself against the psychological and emotional assault and material inducements that go with proselytization. No country in the world would allow virtually unchecked the foreign money and expertise that flows into the Indian churches, much of it under the guise of social aid, when the bigoted leaders of these churches have declared over and over again that they intend the religious and spiritual annihilation of the Hindu community. . . .

Arun Shourie and other scholars have detailed the on-going assault on Hinduism by Christians from British times. Do you see this clash of civilizations abating any time soon?

The clash of civilizations will continue, indeed, will become more pronounced, unless Christianity and Islam give up their religious bigotry and world-conquering ambitions. This is very unlikely as bigotry and religious imperialism are inherent within their belief systems. These systems have to be reformed, but cannot be reformed because their adherents believe that they are the work of Gods of divine revelation. As the systems cannot be changed, the adherents of the systems have to be weaned away from them. This has happened in Europe and, to a lesser extent in America where Christianity has been abandoned for a rational humanism and Vedantic spirituality. But it has not happened in the Islamic and Marxist worlds of Asia and will not happen without a war.

In your book Koenraad Elst quotes the fact that the place where Jesus is alleged to have been crucified was "divined" by Emperor Constantine's mother in a dream. What similar stories do you find in Christian mythology in India?

In the fourth century when Christianity gained political clout in the Roman court, the Emperor's mother Helena "divined" various sites in Palestine which, she claimed, were associated with the life and death of Jesus. These sites already had old Roman temples sitting on them. Nevertheless, in Bethlehem the Church of the Nativity was built on the ruins of a demolished Adonis temple and in Jerusalem the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built over a Venus temple that had been destroyed on Constantine's personal order. See Joan Taylor's book *Christians and the Holy Places*.

The parallel in India is the identification of various temple sites in Kerala with St. Thomas and the building of churches on them by Christian immigrants from Persia in the ninth century. Nestorian Christian missionaries were active on the West Coast and up into Kashmir and Ladakh in the ninth and tenth centuries, and it is they who left crosses carved on rocks and various Christian signs and symbols that later European writers of historical fiction have associated with a life of Jesus in Kashmir.

In the sixteenth century the Portuguese "divined" various sites in Madras at Mylapore, Saidapet, and Big Mount (now known as St. Thomas Mount) that they claimed were associated with the martyrdom and burial of St. Thomas. The temples that occupied these sites, including the original Kapaleeswar Temple referred to in the hymns of Jnanasambandar and Arunagirinathar, were demolished and churches built on their ruins.

There is a certain school of thought that says Jesus Christ came to India and that a lot of what he taught is based on Hindu and Buddhist ideas. Comments?

The idea that Jesus came to India as a boy and studied in a Buddhist monastery or, alternatively, came to India after the crucifixion and married a princess of Kashmir, tickles the romantic imagination of Western travellers and quite a few Indians too. The story originates in a clever piece of fiction

by the Russian forger Nicholas Notovich that was published in Paris in 1894.

It cannot possibly be true, and if it is true it destroys completely the special claims made by Christian doctrine, of the sacrifice made on the cross and the resurrection, and the vicarious salvation of the Christian believer. The Buddhist monastery where Jesus is said to have studied did not exist until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the Srinagar tomb where he is allegedly buried is really the tomb of a Mogul ambassador to Egypt who converted to Christianity while on tour there. The key to unravelling the tale is to study the activities of the 10<sup>th</sup> century Nestorian Christian missionaries who passed through Kashmir on their way to China and left crosses on rocks and an abundance of children with biblical names in their wake.

The Hindu and Buddhist ideas found in the New Testament books, including the Sermon on the Mount, were picked up by the gospel writers in Alexandria from Indian pundits and monks who were teaching there. But it should be remembered that the New Testament books contain ideas quite the opposite of Hindu ideas of pluralism and tolerance. For example, there is the virulent anti-Semitism and religious bigotry of the gospels. Jesus was perhaps the first religious teacher in history to threaten his critics with eternal damnation.

There is another school of thought that says Jesus Christ did not actually exist and that the legends about him are a collection of stories about several other leaders and teachers of the time. Comments?

It is quite true that the New Testament books as we know them today are composite works edited and rewritten a number of times after the fourth-century Council of Nicea. Christian doctrine was formalized at this council and Jesus was raised from mortal prophet to immortal God by a vote of the collected bishops. (Two bishops from Libya voted against deification and were soon murdered by their colleagues.)

Some years after the Council, Emperor Constantine sanc-

tioned and financed a new edition of the Bible. As there were no original documents to work from (they had been destroyed by Emperor Diocletian), the bishops were free to edit, revise, and rewrite the Bible according to their own tenets. (The Old Testament books are also compiled from many sources and they are not a true history of the Jewish people.)

The result of all this fourth-century religious activity is that the Pauline salvation cult that we know today as Christianity came into being. It was modelled on earlier Greek salvation cults except that Jesus replaced Apollo as the saving god. The famous Sermon on the Mount that so appealed to Mahatma Gandhi, is a later literary interpolation from a Pagan source. It may even be of Indian origin.

The Jesus of the Bible is a literary creation, not a real historical person, though it is probable that his character was modelled on that of a real person, say, the Teacher of Righteousness of the Essenes of the Dead Sea. The evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dated 100-200 BCE, bears out the fact that there is nothing new or true in Christianity. The Catholic Church has for decades tried to suppress the evidence of the Scrolls as they virtually prove that there was no historical Jesus as depicted in the New Testament stories.

I do not think that St. Paul believed in a historical Jesus either, which is why he preached a Christ of faith rather than a Jesus of history. The term "Christ" is a Greek title, not a proper name. It can be used as an appellation for any person so deserving and there were many christs in the Roman world of the first century CE. St. Paul is the true founder of the Christian religion. He was a Gnostic and a very forceful character who has left his imprint on all aspects of Christianity. . . .

There seems to be a large element of land-grab in the actions of Christians in India. They buy land, get it ceded by the authorities, and then grab the hillsides by painting crosses on rocks and claiming the area as Christian. The Christian churches are the largest landowners in India after the government. Much of this land is alienated temple land that was given to them by the British in the nineteenth century. They also own large amounts of prize commercial property in the cities. This fact has become a scandal among many of the Christian faithful who do not feel that their churches should be real estate agents and owners.

However, this reservation is not true of the newer, smaller American churches like Pentecostals and Evangelicals who have mounted a caste war against the Hindus and seek to provoke the Hindu community at every opportunity. They simply grab land in the towns and districts by painting crosses and Christian slogans on stones and hillsides and then claiming the property as their own.

This activity is especially evident in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. In Arunachal Pradesh where proselytizing and conversion are illegal, Christians claim whole villages and put up signboards that say "Non-Christians Not Allowed" at their entrances. These Arunachal converts originate from Mother Teresa's institutions in Assam where they are indoctrinated and baptized and then sent back to their villages to convert the elders.

In Tamil Nadu Christian slogans appear on Hindu pilgrim routes to Tirupati\* and on the route around Arunachala Hill at Tiruvannamalai that pilgrims circumambulate on full moon days. I am told that Christians plan to raise a cross on the hill's summit when the opportunity arises. I am not at all surprised. The theoretical ground for this "good deed" has been laid years ago by Catholic theologians and missionaries like Fr. Raimundo Panikker and the Benedictine monk Abhishiktananda. They have already claimed the holy hill and all of India for Christ in their writings. I myself hope that the cross-

<sup>\*</sup> Such aggressive moves by Christian missionaries considerably intensified at Tirupati in 2006, leading to protests by Hindus; as usual, the government flatly denied that anything wrong was going on. (Eds.)

raising comes soon. Perhaps then Hindu leaders and district officials will wake up to the threat that an aggressive, proselytizing Christianity poses to Hinduism's most ancient sacred sites.

There are detailed war-game scenarios on the Internet by various Christian fundamentalist groups who have identified India as a soft target for conversion.

India is a soft target for the Christian missionary for a number of reasons. Firstly, Hindu society still suffers from many social ills that the missionary can exploit; secondly, Hindu society is by nature pluralistic and accommodating of all ideological views including those that would destroy it; and thirdly, Hindu society is divided against itself and its religious and political leaders have failed it totally. These leaders with few exceptions are not willing or able to challenge the ideological forces that would destroy Hindu religion and society.

The result is that Christianity and its younger sister Marxism have the ideological upper hand in India today. They have an unhealthy influence on government, education, publishing, the English-language media, and some vital social services. It is a shocking situation for which Hindus themselves are to blame (even if the overall situation is a legacy of British days). The very fact that Hindu intellectuals and entrepreneurs are not able to publish a national daily newspaper and present their own point of view to the world is sad proof of Sri Aurobindo's observation that Hindus have lost the power to think.

There is the decline of the church, particularly the Catholic Church, in Europe and the Americas. Hence the need to find new recruits to man the barricades in the growing clash of civilizations with Muslims. There is the need to create nuns and priests in Kerala as they provide a lot of menial labour in European convents and monasteries. Is there a pattern? Is there an element of racial exploitation as well?

... Indian priests and nuns are the peasant workers of the Catholic Church. They are welcome in Europe and America to clean the toilets and scrub the floors of the empty convents and seminaries, nurse the sick and dying, present the news in funny English on Vatican Radio, write lengthy dissertations on indigenizing the church in India, and get trained as native missionaries for work in the jungles and outback.

This is the pattern and it has been followed for decades. Indian priests and nuns are numerous and expendable. They are everywhere there is dirty work to be done. They are the first victims of the white man's most elitist institution. Casteism is rampant. They seldom if ever move up the ecclesiastical ladder if there is a European available to fill the post. There are in South India only two or three Dalit bishops and one of them is an Anglican (CSI).

Everybody knows that if a black pope were ever elected (and Indians are black people according to Europeans) the Catholic Church would lose half of its membership. It cannot be otherwise in a European feudal institution whose bishops wrote the first theoretical justification for slavery in the sixteenth century. After all, the Bible says (1 Peter 2:18-25), "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward."

I have had more than one Dalit convert tell me that the racism and caste prejudice within the Christian churches is a crime against humanity.\* I have to agree. I have to say after a lifetime of study, that the advent of Christianity and its forced establishment in the Roman Empire under the wicked Emperor Constantine is one of the great disasters in the history of mankind.

#### क्ष ज्य

<sup>\*</sup>The discrimination facing the Dalit convert to Christianity is elaborated on in the companion volume, Christianity: Proselytism and Conversion, with a focus on India (Eds.)

## Part 2

# Expressions of Christianity in the West

The expansion of Christianity was marked not only by the destruction of numerous cultures, but by many millions of deaths across Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia. In the words of the French philosopher Voltaire, Christianity "deluged the earth with blood for the sake of

unintelligible sophisms."\* While a few enlightened minds of the eighteenth century were conscious of the record of Christianity, since then this awareness seems to have receded, despite many important studies adding much to our knowledge. Western countries still often regard themselves as Christian, despite being secular, and tend, in their educational system as in public life, to tone down or sanitize the crimes against humanity committed for centuries in the name of Jesus. In India, this dark chapter of world history is simply erased and never discussed, inventing in effect the spotless image of a religion of love and sacrifice — sacrifice of the Other, but that detail is omitted.

As Swami Vivekananda put it, "With all your brags and boastings, where has your Christianity succeeded without the sword? Show me one place in the whole world. One, I say, throughout the history of the Christian religion — one; I do not want two. I know how your forefathers were converted. They had to be converted or killed; that was all. What can you do better than Mohammedanism, with all your bragging? 'We are the only one!' and why? 'Because we can kill others.' "\*\*

The articles in this section offer a few glimpses of what Sri Aurobindo called the "barbaric persecution which [drew] a long, red and hideous stain across the religious history of Europe,"\*\*\* from early times right up to World War II. They are not intended to demonize Christianity, rather to bear witness in memoriam of the millions it demonized and martyred for no fault of theirs.

CB

<sup>\*</sup> Voltaire, Philosophical Dictionary (1769); see the entry "Religion," fifth question.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Swami Vivekananda, Complete Works (1990), VIII.213.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Sri Aurobindo, The Foundations of Indian Culture (1972 ed.), p. 130.

## WOMAN IN CHRISTIANITY

#### Michel Danino\*

Christian evangelistic literature abounds in condemnations of Hindu society; so do, occasionally, "secular" Indological studies. The favourite *bête noire* is of course the caste system; the Hindu woman — depressed, oppressed, suppressed, if we are to believe the suave messengers of the Good News — comes a close second. I will not go here into the correctness of the charge, as it has already been abundantly answered. But it helps to look at the way Christian West treated its own women, not only in its scripture but in actual practice.

Let us not be told that this treatment, whatever it was, belongs to the past and is of no relevance to current situations. True, from the nineteenth century onward, the status of woman in the West has considerably improved (although not always as much as is projected). But that in no way prevents us from asking the evangelist how he views the Bible's degrading pronouncements on woman, and Christianity's appalling record in the matter. For if he justifies them, he automatically falls from his moral high ground; if he condemns them, he condemns the very creed he is asking others to embrace; and if he attempts to conceal or to overlook them — his usual and safest line of defence, for its strength derives from people's profound ignorance of history — then he is open to the charge of intellectual dishonesty.

Confronting the past is always a healthy exercise. Let us brace ourselves and have a glimpse of just a few cases studies;

<sup>\*</sup>French-born Michel Danino came to India in 1977; he has lectured and written on various aspects of Indian civilization and culture. Among his books is *The Invasion That Never Was*, a study of the Aryan invasion (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. forthcoming). (Eds.)

they are enough to edify us on what many have revealed, what many more have concealed, and what most remain unaware of.

#### The root of the evil

The root of the problem, at least, has been pointed out often enough: woman is an inferior being, since, according to Genesis, she was created out of Adam's rib so he may have a "helper"; having listened to the serpent's evil advice and eaten of the forbidden apple, she is cursed by Jehovah: "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). This was the first of an oppressively long and gloomy series of curses thrown at individuals, clans, nations, regions, and sometimes the whole earth. Something had gone seriously wrong with the creation within two pages of God's only book — and woman was responsible for it.

From then on, she is always portrayed as man's subordinate, sometimes his property. A man, for instance, has the right to sell off his daughter as a servant or slave (Exodus 21:7-11); he is prohibited from marrying a widow or a divorcee (Leviticus 21:13); a woman is "unclean" for seven days after giving birth to a son, but for fourteen after giving birth to a daughter (Leviticus 12:2 & 5); God even finds time for a long discourse on a woman's menses, how they are unclean, polluting to others, and must be atoned for through the sacrifice of pigeons and doves (Leviticus 15:19-30). There are numerous commandments on killing or marrying captive women (Numbers 31: 17-18, Deuteronomy 21: 11), on how a woman who cannot prove her virginity at the time of marriage must be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22: 20-21), on how a rapist must marry his victim (Deuteronomy 22: 28-29) - and on many more such matters so divine that they can only cause loathing and nausea in any normally constituted reader: "horror and indignation at every page,"  $^2$  as Voltaire once put it.

The usual Christian response to the Old Testament's endless obscenities is that they belonged to a barbaric age and were needed to make a barbaric people mend its ways. A strange argument, when we remember that this supposedly barbaric people is also God's "chosen" one. Moreover, we must conclude that Christians were as barbaric as the Hebrews, since this sort of language resurfaces in the New Testament. While Jesus, as portrayed in the gospels, treats women equitably on the whole, some of his disciples fall back into the old perversity. Paul, especially, argues at length that a woman, unlike man, should have her head covered when she worships; his clinching argument: "... the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man ..., man is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (I Corinthians, 11:3-9). Similarly, in the church, "women should remain silent ... they are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission ... it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (14:34-35). In fact, "a woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (I Timothy 2:11-14).

Early Church fathers and writers took their cue from Paul. Second-century Tertullian wrote, "Each of you women is an Eve. ... You are the gate of Hell, you are the temptress of the forbidden tree; you are the first deserter of the divine law.<sup>3</sup> ... On account of your desert — that is, death — even the Son of God had to die."<sup>4</sup> His contemporary St. Clement added, "Every woman should be filled with shame by the thought that she is a woman."<sup>5</sup> For Chrysostom, woman was "a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic

peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill." Numerous other "saints," from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas, added generously to such imprecations. So-called "Reformers" did not think there was anything worth reforming in this matter; if anything their attitude was often worse, as they insisted on a rigorous adherence to the Bible.

### Hypatia

"I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man," decreed Paul. This sentence may have sealed the fate of the gifted and admired Hypatia of Alexandria. A mathematician, astronomer and Platonist philosopher, she had many students, including prominent Christians, in this Egyptian centre of Hellenistic culture founded on the Mediterranean by Alexander the Great.



An imagined portrait of Hypatia (early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

Here is how the contemporary Christian historiographer Socrates Scholasticus portrays her:

There was a woman at Alexandria named Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who made such attainments in literature and science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time. Having succeeded to the school of Plato and Plotinus, she explained the principles of philosophy to her auditors, many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions. On account of the self-possession and ease of manner, which she had acquired in consequence of the cultivation of her mind, she not infrequently appeared in public in presence of the magistrates. Neither did she feel abashed in going to an assembly of men. For all men on account of

her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more.<sup>7</sup>

Among the statements attributed to her are: "Reserve your right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all" and "To teach superstitions as truth is a most terrible thing." Hypatia, in effect, headed the Platonist school at Alexandria. She must have known that trouble was brewing: in 391, Roman emperor Theodosius\* acceded to the request of the bishop of Alexandria to destroy Egyptian religious institutions. Amidst much slaughter, Christian mobs promptly razed Pagan monuments, including the temple of Serapis which housed what remained of the famed Library of Alexandria. In 412, Cyril, the new bishop of Alexandria, showed even more zeal and got the Alexandrian Jews expelled two years later; he also grew jealous of the popularity and respect, bordering on veneration, that Hypatia enjoyed. Most scholars agree that he instigated one Peter to take action: Socrates Scholasticus continues his account thus:

Yet even she fell a victim to the political jealousy which at that time prevailed. ... Some of them [among the Christian populace] therefore, hurried away by a fierce and bigoted zeal, whose ringleader was a reader named Peter, waylaid her returning home, and dragging her from her carriage, they took her to the church called Caesareum, where they completely stripped her, and then murdered her with tiles [oyster shells]. After tearing her body in pieces, they took her mangled limbs to a place called Cinaron, and there burnt them. This affair brought not the least opprobrium, not only upon Cyril, but also upon the whole Alexandrian church.<sup>8</sup>

The event shocked Alexandria and prompted a number of scholars to leave this centre of learning. Symbolically,

<sup>\*</sup>See "Early Christian Destruction of Pagan Cultures" in Part 1. (Eds.)

Hypatia's murder sounded the end of the classical age and the advent of Christianity's Dark Ages.

Not surprisingly, Cyril was canonized as a reward for his war on Pagans (and on Nestorius, a Christian heretic).\* Even less surprisingly, later Christian historians portrayed Hypatia as a witch and a sorceress. John of Nikiu, for instance, writing in the seventh century, accused her of "beguiling many people through her Satanic wiles," described in graphic detail her murder by "believers in God" and congratulated Cyril for having "destroyed the last remains of idolatry in the city."

#### The witch hunts

This art of demonizing an innocent victim of Christian fanaticism was to be further refined during the infamous witch hunts of the Middle Ages. Virtually every folk culture in the world practised (and sometimes still practises) some kind of magic, charms and sortileges, often associated with the treatment of disease. But in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Church gave a wholly different meaning to those practices, associating them with a new, uniquely "Christian" belief — that of the Devil. Seized by a growing fear of being overthrown by Satan, it started looking around for its accomplices and remembered its hatred of woman; it also remembered the Bible's command: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22: 18). 10 The Church in effect invented the witch: any woman suspected of practising sorcery now became an agent of the Devil; she had made a pact with him, received her powers from him, and therefore became an enemy of Christ and of Christians; she flew on broomsticks, took part in satanic orgies with other witches, occasionally fornicated with Satan himself, and killed infants to prepare magic ointments out of their flesh, among other heinous

<sup>\*</sup> Symptomatically, the Webster's New World Dictionary has no entry for Hypatia, but one for Cyril, as a saint.

crimes. No doubt, men also could practise witchcraft, but the Church, fed on the biblical bias against women, focused on the latter in what became known as the "witch trials." Michelet, the famous nineteenth-century French historian, was perhaps the first to expose their monstrosity in his book *The Witch* (1862), which he intended to be a "hymn to beneficent woman, the victim"; Michelet indeed showed how most of the victims were women: "for one sorcerer, ten thousand witches," he said metaphorically; today's historians put the proportion of female victims nearer three-quarters.

The witch hunts began around 1300 and spread to much of Europe. In 1374, Pope Gregory XI declared that witchcraft could only be carried out with Satan's help and constituted a heresy, a charge amplified a century later by Pope Innocent VIII. In 1486, two Inquisitors, Heinrich Krämer and Jacob Sprenger, published *Malleus maleficarum*<sup>11</sup> ("The Hammer of Witches"), a treatise reprinted at least thirty times in the next two centuries, widely read and constantly quoted at the trials conducted by the Inquisition, as it included a detailed manual on how to detect "the great multitude of witches" and extract their confession. But first, it provided an elaborate theological foundation for the existence of witches driven by Satan, asserting that to doubt the existence of witchcraft was itself heresy. And it imprinted on the European mind the worst possible stereotypes on woman:

If we inquire, we find that nearly all the kingdoms of the world have been overthrown by women.... It is no wonder if the world now suffers through the malice of women.... If the world could be rid of women, we should not be without God in our intercourse. For truly, without the wickedness of women, to say nothing of witcheraft, the world would still remain proof against innumerable dangers....

The first defect in [Wamen's] intelligence is that they are more prone to abjure the faith .... [Woman] is a har by hattire; an in her speech she stings while she delights us. ... She is more bitter than death, because death is natural and destroys only the body; but the sin which arose from woman destroys the soul by depriving it of grace, and delivers the body up to the punishment of sin. ... All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. For the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils.... it is no matter for wonder that there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft. ... <sup>12</sup>

Whose "carnal lust," one may ask? For centuries, theologians and clergymen have perversely projected their own sexual frustrations on women; from the notorious orgies of Pope Alexander VI (member of the infamous Borgia family) to today's countless cases of sexual abuse of children, the disastrous results of the Church's hypocritical policy of celibacy are too well known to need emphasis. Our virtuous Inquisitors continue:

The heresy of witches is the most heinous of the three degrees of infidelity [i.e. that of Pagans, Jews and heretics]. The Apostasy of witches... is so much the more heinous, in that it springs from a pact made with the enemy of the Faith and the way of salvation.<sup>13</sup>

And so on, page after dismal page. After the theory, the practice:

But if neither threats nor such promises will induce her to confess the truth, then the officers must proceed with the sentence, and she must be examined, not in any new or exquisite manner, but in the usual way, lightly or heavily according as the nature of her crimes demands. And while she is being questioned about each several point, let her be often and frequently exposed to torture, beginning with the more gentle of them; for the Judge should not be too

hasty to proceed to the graver kind. And while this is being done, let the Notary write all down, how she is tortured and what questions are asked and how she answers. ... The next step of the Judge should be that, if after being fittingly tortured she refuses to confess the truth, he should have other engines of torture brought before her, and tell her that she will have to endure these if she does not confess. If then she is not induced by terror to confess, the torture must be continued on the second or third day, but not repeated at that present time unless there should be some fresh indication of its probable success. 14

Such instructions were zealously put into practice. The Church gave itself all powers to arrest anyone suspected of this crime, and to torture the suspect until she or he confessed. Any mole or wart could be regarded as Satan's mark on the witch's body. Denunciations were encouraged, which made it easy to use the charge of witchcraft to settle scores; worse, suspects were tortured into naming imagined accomplices, including relatives and children, leading to further arrests of agents of Satan. The cruellest methods of the Inquisition were applied on the hapless victims, leaving them little chance to escape: either they confessed, and were then often burned at the stake in a public auto-da-fé (with their properties confiscated, which made it a lucrative business for the Church), or they persisted in protesting their innocence: but as this could only be proof that they received their strength from Satan, the severity of the torture increased, until the "witch" either died or confessed

The witch trials spread beyond Europe to America: in the famous Salem witch trials of 1863 fin Massachusetts), ninsteen "witches" were hanged to desite an almost merciful method of execution by European alandards. In Mexico, the peasancy forme real percential by Franch tank who declared the incorporation of the the whit is the text.

In this dreadful application of "God's love," Protestants were on a par with their Catholic enemies: both shared the same gloomy ideology of evil. From the eighteenth century, the witch trials gradually abated as the Enlightenment built up its challenge against Christianity. Still, isolated cases of persecution, and sometimes burning, of so-called witches have continued into the twentieth century.\* Worse, the Church's mindset on the issue has hardly changed: in 1928, Rev. Montague Summers, while translating the *Malleus maleficarum* into English from the original Latin, praised it as "admirable in spite of its trifling blemishes";\*\* fully endorsing its vision of witchcraft, he wrote:

Who can be surprised if, when faced with so vast a conspiracy, the methods employed by the Holy Office [of the Inquisition] may not seem — if the terrible conditions are conveniently forgotten — a little drastic, a little severe? There can be no doubt that had this most excellent tribunal continued to enjoy its full prerogative and the full exercise of its salutary powers, the world at large would be in a far happier and far more orderly position today. 15

How touching a nostalgia for the "most excellent" Holy Inquisition, and what a pity that it could not continue to exert its "salutary powers"! Twenty years later, the good Reverend, in a preface to a fresh edition of his translation, again praised this "most solid work on witchcraft" and admired "the modernity of the book," its "unflinching logic, and ... scrupulous

<sup>\*</sup> An odd case: a English law of 1677 which condemned anyone predicting the weather to be burned at the stake was abrogated only in ... 1959 (though thankfully not applied for the last few centuries).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Incredibly, those "blemishes" do not include torture, but refer to etymological errors. For instance, the authors of *Malleus maleficarum* derive the word "feminine" from "fe" and "minus," i.e. "lesser faith": this was one more proof of the evil nature of woman. (In reality, the Latin word *femina* derives from *felare*, to suckle; it has the same root as "fecund," "felicity," etc.)

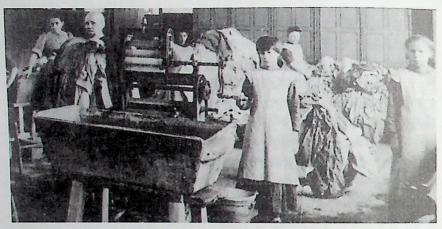
impartiality"; this manual of the Inquisition was therefore "sub specie aeternitatis," i.e. eternally true. It is hard to believe that we are in 1948 — though not so hard if one keeps in mind that the Church never expressed regret for its actions under the Inquisition or asked forgiveness from the descendants of the "witches" tortured and burned at the stake.

How many wretched women disappeared will never be known. Conservative historians now put the number at 60,000 at most, <sup>16</sup> but there is ground to believe that the actual figure is much higher: only a fraction of the records has survived, and many of the victims might never have been recorded, since in some countries the Church did not have the power to execute convicts: it theoretically had to hand over the "witch" to secular authorities for the sentence to be carried out; in practice, however, the Church had ways to pressure the said authorities, and did pretty much as it pleased: there was no compulsion on it to report those who died under torture.

But it is not the exact number that matters. What matters is that many of the Inquisitors believed they were acting "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (to quote Malleus maleficarum). In the name of Jesus, they found it desirable and "salutary" to plunge countless innocents into the darkest abysses of human cruelty. No other religion ever cultivated such heights of perversity.

## Christianity's dirty linen

Despite the age of Enlightenment, prejudices against within have persisted well into our rational age. Matilifa Joslyn Gage, a courageous pioneer of the feminist movement in the U.S.A., authored in 1893 a monumental study of the status of woman through the Christian ages. Their scrupulously documented book is a call to women as well as a challenge to both Church and State:



A Magdalen Laundry in Ireland, early 20th century

As I look backward through history I see the church everywhere stepping upon advancing civilization, hurling woman from the plane of "natural right" where the fact of her humanity had placed her, and through itself, and its control over the state, in the doctrine of "revealed rights" everywhere teaching an inferiority of sex; a created subordination of woman to man; making her very existence a sin; holding her accountable to a diverse code of morals from man: declaring her possessed of fewer rights in church and in state; her very entrance into heaven made dependent upon some man to come as mediator between her and the Saviour it has preached, thus crushing her personal, intellectual and spiritual freedom. Looking forward, I see evidence of a conflict more severe than any yet fought by reformation or science; a conflict that will shake the foundations of religious belief, tear into fragments and scatter to the winds the old dogmas upon which all forms of Christianity are based.18

Woman, Church and State makes for painful reading, detailing numerous forms of abuse perpetrated right up to the nineteenth century, including the most revolting sexual

exploitation ordered by Church authorities and Christian nations.

A few years ago, the case of the "Magdalene laundries" was brought to light, a case that matches point by point some of those narrated by Matilda J. Gage. 19 In the nineteenth century, the Good Shepherd Sisters of Ireland founded a few "Magdalen asylums" for prostitutes (named on the false assimilation of Mary Magdalene of the Gospels with a prostitute, a canard started by the early Church). In the twentieth century, however, as the asylums came to shelter pregnant or abandoned girls, unwed mothers, also rape victims, they gradually changed from refuges to prisons of "repentance," where girls were virtual slaves, identified with a mere number, made to wash laundry for long hours, starved, forbidden to speak, often beaten, sometimes sexually abused. Being too pretty was reason enough for a girl to be sent to the Madgalen laundries. At least 30,000 girls and women passed through these "refuges" in the twentieth century; many never came out: after their death, they were quietly buried in unmarked graves. One such mass grave — of 155 inmates — was discovered in 1993, when these scandalous institutions came to light for the first time, causing widespread shock and disbelief. The last of them closed in 1996.

As a commentator remarked recently, "The moral horror of the Magdalene laundries is that the abuses they perpetrated were not the outgrowths of simple sadism, or even of unmindfulness, but of a belief that they were intended for the victims' own good."<sup>20</sup> Christian beliefs and "feelings" had once more wreaked havoc with the lives of tens of thousands of women. The Catholic Church never offered an apology, much less compensation for the surviving victims.

#### The fear of woman

Behind those unforgivable cruelties inflicted on women over centuries, what we discern is not just male chauvinism,

sexism or intolerance, but, at bottom, fear. Fear of woman's true spiritual power, the very power that Hinduism has exalted — also the early Gnostic Christians, who celebrated divinity as both male and female, and were ruthlessly suppressed as heretics by the growing orthodoxy. Indeed, India's treatment of woman appears almost blameless in comparison. We can surely find a few derogatory statements here and there (although not in the major texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads or the Gita), and examples of perverse or discriminatory practices in society, but nothing remotely like the Christian record. India would have appeared as heaven to many women of medieval or even nineteenth-century Christendom.

Today's liberal Christians would argue that their interest lies in Jesus' central teachings, not in any literal acceptance of every biblical pronouncement; and most would readily condemn the witch hunts, the Inquisition and other abuses. But they must go one step further and call for a frank acknowledgement and sincere apology from the churches responsible for those crimes against woman's dignity and humanity.

And in the end, the question remains: for a creed to have produced so many monstrosities for so long, should we put it down, as liberal Christians do, to overzealousness, dogmatism or some unspecified aberration, or should we not, rather, question the creed itself?

#### क्ष ज्य

#### References

- 1. For biblical quotations, I have used Today's New International Version of the Bible, except in note 12 below.
- 2. Voltaire, "Homily on the Interpretation of the Old Testament," in *A Treatise on Toleration and Other Essays* (New York: Prometheus Books), p. 137.
- 3. Quoted in "Why Women Need Freedom From Religion" by Annie Laurie Gaylor, at http://ffrf.org/nontracts/women.php.

- 4. Quoted by Helen Ellerbe, *The Dark Side of Christian History* (Orlando: Morningstar & Lark, 1995), p. 115.
- 5. Ibid., p. 114.
- Quoted by Matilda Joslyn Gage, Woman, Church and State: a Historical Account of the Status of Woman through the Christian Ages with Reminiscences of the Matriarcate (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1893, republished New Delhi: Voice of India, 1997), p. 74.
- 7. Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII.15, quoted in the article "Hypatia of Alexandria," online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* (22 July 2006): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypatia\_of\_Alexandria.
- 8. Same as preceding note.
- 9. John, Bishop of Nikiu, Chronicle 84.87-103. See online extracts at: www.cosmopolis.com/alexandria/hypatia-bio-john.html
- 10. Here I used the King James version. *Today's New International Version of the Bible* has "Do not allow a sorceress to live," a choice of word clearly intended to attenuate the connection with the witch hunts.
- 11. A complete English translation of this infamous book is available online, and is recommended reading for those who wish to understand the workings of Inquisitors' minds:

www.malleusmaleficarum.org.

- 12. Malleus maleficarum, Part I, Question VI.
- 13. Ibid., Part I, Question XIV.
- 14. Ibid., Part III, Second Head, Question XIV.
- 15. Rev. Montague Summers, Introduction to the 1928 edition of Malleus maleficarum.
- 16. See for instance Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2004 ed., article "witch-craft."
- 17. See note 7.
- 18. Matilda Joslyn Gage, Woman, Church and State, p. 544.
- 19. See Frances Finnegan, 'Do Penance or Perish': A Study of Magdalen Asylums in Ireland (Piltown: Congrave Press, 2001).
- 20. Mary Gordon in the New York Times, 3 August 2003.

# The Holy Inquisition

Since its inception, the Church sought to suppress heresy, by which it meant whatever it perceived to be giving an alternative interpretation of Christian tenets. Among the early examples of suppressed heretics are the Gnostic Christians.

A landmark in the war against heresy was the thirteenthcentury campaign against the sect of the Cathars of the Languedoc region of southern France — the so-called Cathar or Albigensian Crusade. The Cathars, established there two centuries earlier, rejected the Old Testament, arguing that its god was really the devil, chose John's Revelation as their central text, and believed in reincarnation; they advocated a life of simplicity and purity, shunned meat and fish, and condemned war and capital punishment. They enjoyed much respect among the population, which helped thwart early attempts by successive papal emissaries to make them renounce their creed. But Pope Innocent III grew impatient, declaring that "anyone who attempts to construe a personal view of God which conflicts with Church dogma must be burned without pity." In 1209, he finally ordered a crusade to stamp out the sect and its followers; because he was clever enough to decree that all land owned by Cathars could be confiscated at will, many nobles from northern France joined in on the side of the Church. The town of Béziers fell on July 22; when the abbot-commander was asked how to distinguish a Cathar from a Catholic, he reportedly replied, "Kill them all, the Lord will recognize His own," and by the end of the day wrote to the Pope, "Today your Holiness, twenty thousand citizens were put to the sword, regardless of rank, age, or sex." Such slaughters followed in other towns for two decades, making hundreds of thousands of victims (many of them ordinary Christians) and leaving the Cathars severely crippled.

With the Roman Catholic Church's political influence in western Europe now firm enough, in 1231 Pope Gregory IX

institutionalized suppression in the form of the *Inquisition*, a special tribunal for heretics, manned mostly by Dominicans and Franciscans. The Cathars were its first target. On 16 March 1244, over 200 initiates were seized from the Cathar fortress of Montségur, which had withstood a year-long siege, and thrown into a fire at the foot of the fortress. Hundreds more perished at the stake as a result of Inquisition trials over the next century, till the movement died out.

In 1252, Pope Innocent IV (another "innocent") sanctioned the use of torture in Inquisition trials to obtain confessions of heresy as well as the names of other heretics. While immediate confessions were at times treated leniently (though often with excommunication, humiliating penitence, or confiscation of property), heretics who refused to "recant" were handed over to secular authorities to be executed.

The Inquisition spread to France, Germany and the Scandi-



navian countries. In Spain, it was established by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Castile (1478), where it targeted mostly converts from Judaism suspected of relapsing to their original faith. The methods used were so brutal that in 1482, Pope Sixtus IV noted that the Spanish Inquisitors "without observing juridical prescriptions, have detained many persons in violation of justice, punishing them

A painting of 1475 showing the public sentencing (auto-da-fe) of heretics by severe tortures and imputing to them, without foundation, the crime of heresy, and despoiling of their wealth those sentenced to death, in such form that a great number of them have come to the Apostolic See, fleeing from such excessive rigor and protesting their orthodoxy." He appointed a Grand Inquisitor, the dreaded Dominican Tomás de Torquemada, who, far from lessening the severity of the Inquisition, made ample use of torture and confiscation to terrorize his victims, thousands of whom ended at the stake. Spain extended the Inquisition to Holland, then its possession, and to some of its colonies, such as Peru and Mexico, for the benefit of native converts.

Portugal followed Spain, with its King João III establishing the Holy Inquisition there in 1536. At the request of Jesuit missionaries such as Francis Xavier, it spread to Portugal's empire in Asia (see Part 3).

About that time, Protestants were added to the list of heretics in all Catholic countries.

It would be a gruesome task to detail the numerous instruments of torture invented by those pious servants of Lord Jesus Christ. Suffice it to say that some were designed to crush thumbs, stretch limbs to dislocation, break them, burn and suffocate, rip out flesh or wrench breasts and genitals. Gentler methods included suspending the accused with his or her hands bound behind the back, thus dislocating the shoulder joints; weights could be added to the legs for greater effectiveness. Historians and Christian scholars who sometimes attempt to "relativize" the Inquisition, claiming that it was not as black as portrayed, often fail to confront such revolting and unprecedented inhumanity. Equally inhuman was the culture of denunciation promoted by the Inquisition. With his typical irony, Voltaire wrote in his Philosophical Dictionary: "As everyone knows, the Inquisition is an admirable and wholly Christian invention designed to make the Pope and monks more powerful, and a whole kingdom hypocritical. . . . This tribunal's procedures are sufficiently well known. You can be jailed on the mere denunciation of the vilest characters; a son can denounce his father, a wife her husband. You are never confronted with your accusers; your goods are confiscated for the benefit of judges. That, at least, is how the Inquisition has behaved to this day; there is indeed something divine there, for it passes understanding how men have suffered this yoke so patiently."

The Inquisition did not judge only human beings; it also judged books, sentenced them and often burned them, to stop them from propagating ideas regarded as heretical, or simply susceptible of promoting free, independent thinking. "Indexes" of prohibited titles were published at regular intervals in many countries of Europe; besides the writings of Christian heretics (including a few great mystics), the indexes listed, for instance, those of Ovid, Dante, Rabelais, Machiavelli, Erasmus, and the great works of Spanish literature. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church made it mandatory for authors to seek its permission the obnoxious imprimatur — before publishing a work, which meant submitting to a censor in the first place. The Church in effect became the world's first thought police; had this been in its power, it would have publicly burned ideas at the stake. Although this policy no doubt prolonged Europe's Dark Ages, it also produced a backlash during the age of Enlightenment.

The Inquisition persecuted or threatened many thinkers. Perhaps the most dramatic case is that of *Giordano Bruno*, born in 1548 near Naples in southern Italy. Completing theological studies in a Dominican convent at Naples, he rebelled against Christian narrow-mindedness and read some of the banned philosophers. Threatened with a trial for heresy, he left the Dominican order at the age of 30 and travelled to Geneva, where he was drawn to Calvinism until he realized it was equally intolerant. He spent four years in France, where, under the protection of Henry III, he published his first works, then travelled to England where he wrote *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds* (1584). Returning to France, he moved on to Germany, where he published *On the Immeasurable and Innumerable*. Such works not only accepted Copernicus's heliocentrism, still regarded as heretic, but went further by



Burning of heretic books by the Spanish Inquisition (fifteenth-century painting)

arguing in favour of an infinite universe with multiple worlds: "Whoever denies the infinity denies the infinite power." In 1591, Bruno took the risk of travelling to Venice at the invitation of an aristocrat, where he taught mathematics and the art of memory. The next year, however, his host denounced him to the Inquisition, and he was soon extradited to Rome and thrown into a dungeon. Questioned for seven long years, occasionally tortured, Bruno refused to retract his theories. On February 8, 1600, he was awarded the death sentence as "an impenitent heretic, obstinate and stubborn," but defied his judges with these words: "Perhaps your fear in passing judgment on me is greater than mine in receiving it." On the 17th, his tongue torn out for "the dreadful words he had proffered," he was burnt at the stake. His thoughts lived on and nourished later thinkers.

His contemporary *Galileo* was luckier. His astronomical research convinced him of the correctness of the Copernican theory, but he was forced to stop his teachings when this theory was condemned by the Vatican in 1616. He defended himself through a brilliant book published in 1632, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems, Ptolemaic & Copernican*, which resulted in the Inquisition summoning him to Rome the next year. Pronounced suspect of heresy, Galileo was compelled to formally abjure his theories and condemned to life imprisonment. He spent his last ten years under house arrest, arranging to have another major work of physics clandestinely published in Holland, even though he had become blind by then — but not as blind as those who had arrogated to themselves the right to halt the flow of ideas.

The Inquisition was abolished in Spain as late as 1834. The abhorred phrase "Holy Office of the Inquisition" continued however to be used by the Vatican until 1908. The Church never apologized to the memory of its numberless victims; many prelates, in fact, long retained a nostalgia for the good old, and dark, times.

OB

# Joan of Arc, a "Relapsed Heretic"

From the twelfth century onward, England started seizing control of parts of the French territory; the "Hundred Years' War" (1337-1453) saw a long series of military campaigns coupled with a complex game of regional alliances. Midway through it, in the 1420s, England held a large swath of France north of the river Loire (including Paris), had the support of Burgundy in the east, of Aquitaine in the south-west, and seemed poised to claim the French crown, taking advantage of internal discords and the demoralized state of its opponents. The French heir to the throne, the young but weary dauphin Charles, was thinking of retiring to Spain or even yielding to the English.

Early May 1429, Orléans on the river Loire (central France) was on the verge of falling to an English siege, when a relief army unexpectedly appeared on the scene — led not by a king or a general, but by a frail-looking seventeen-year-old girl: Joan the Maid, as she was then known ("Jeanne la Pucelle"). Joan managed to penetrate the siege; then, galvanizing the troops, she launched surprise offensives on English strongholds, forcing them to retreat. The citizens saw this unhoped-for victory as nothing short of divine intervention.

Two months earlier, apparently out of nowhere, Joan had reached Chinon, further downstream, with a small escort, and had asked to meet Charles; he finally accepted, but concealed himself among his courtiers. Joan, however, walked straight to him, bowed, and delivered her message: through her, he would be crowned king at Reims (in north-east France) and the English would be driven away, for such was the will of the "King of Heaven" who had sent her. Both statements were unbelievable at the time; but both came true.

Joan was a pious peasant girl born in Domrémy (in the eastern region of Lorraine) in 1412; from the age of thirteen, she heard divine voices telling her of her mission to liberate

France and crown the dauphin: the voices. sometimes accompanied by visions, introduced themselves as St. Michael. St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, and she resolved to obey them heart and soul. At the age of sixteen, she tried to convince the captain holding a nearby town against the English army to give her an escort so she could go and meet the dauphin; only a year later did he yield, impressed by the popular enthusiasm for this girl. After an 11-day horse ride



Joan of Arc, carrying her standard into battle (from a 1505 manuscript)

through enemy territory, she reached her first goal. She persistently asked Charles to let her lead an army onto Orléans; he first had her examined by courtiers and theologians, who "marvelled at her replies, finding something divine in them." An armour was made for her; she dressed like a man, and designed her own standard bearing Jesus' image, which she would always hold high in battle.

The rest is history: Orléans was followed by a spectacular series of victories that reversed the tide of the war; the "Maid of Orléans" not only inspired the soldiers, but displayed great physical courage and a solid common sense. In the middle of the campaign, Charles, after some hesitation, took her advice and was crowned in her presence in the cathedral of Reims on 17 July 1429 as Charles VII; she knelt before him and called him "my King" for the first time.

On 23 May of the following year, however, Jeanne was captured at Compiègne by the Burgundians, who had allied

themselves with England. On payment of 10,000 livres by the English, she was handed over to Pierre Cauchon, bishop of Beauvais, one of the many French "collaborators" of the time. Cauchon had her transported to Rouen, capital of Normandy, then held by the English. They were keen to exact revenge, but with due propriety: nothing like a trial for heresy, Cauchon assured them.

On 21 February 1431, the Inquisition trial opened. Against the law, Joan was a prisoner of the English, chained at her bed of straw when she was not summoned to a hall to respond to the thousand questions of some sixty Inquisitors, theologians of the Paris University, experts in law, and politicians, most of whom were her avowed enemies, for she had threatened their positions. And respond she did, with fearless assertions of her faith.\* Joan was repeatedly questioned about her childhood, in the vain hope of finding some trace of witchcraft, about her campaigns, about her "indecent" man's dress; but the crux of the trial was her visions of the saints and their voices — which she continued to hear while in jail, and which enjoined her to "answer boldly." "This voice comes from God," she asserted again and again; "I am more afraid of failing the voices by saying what is displeasing to them, than of answering you." When asked whether she was in God's grace (a loaded question, for an affirmative reply would have been a boast, and a negative one as an admission of fraud), Joan confounded the assembly of learned men: "If I am not, may God put me there; and if I am, may God so keep me." She had done everything on God's command, and had been repeatedly assured that the English would be driven out of France - a prophecy that must have made her questioners cringe. Clearly, those voices could only be from the Devil himself.

<sup>\*</sup> The minutes of the trial are reproduced in *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc* (translated into English from the Original Latin and French Documents) by W. P. Barrett (Gotham House, 1932). All quotations of the trial are from this text, which is available at:

www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/joanofarc-trial.html,

On May 9, "many of the points were read and explained to her, and she was told that if she did not confess them truthfully she would be put to the torture, the instruments of which were shown to her all ready in the tower [where Joan was jailed]." Joan was undaunted: "Truly if you were to tear me limb from limb and separate my soul from my body, I would not tell you anything more." While a minority of the judges found it "wise" or "good for the health of her soul to put her to the torture," most disagreed, opining that their case was strong enough as it was. One questioner "warned her that she must believe that the Catholic Church is incapable of error or false judgment" and accused her of "falsely prophesying." Indeed, Joan, by claiming to be missioned by God, "must be suspected of idolatry; ... she has imitated the rites of the heathen ... the said woman is treacherous, cunning, cruel, athirst for the spilling of human blood, seditious, inciting to tyranny, and blasphemous of God." But the gravest reproach was that Joan claimed to have a direct communication with God, bypassing the Church: "I have a good master, Our Lord, to whom I refer everything, and to none other." She was guilty of "believing in the instruction of these saints, whom you invoked ... without seeking counsel from your priest or from any other ecclesiastic." There could be no greater threat to the Church: how could one have a direct relationship with God?

Eventually, after long public admonitions, she was made to sign a statement renouncing a man's dress and admitting the falsity of her voices. Four days later, however, she was found wearing a man's dress again, and said that her signed recantation amounted to "damning herself in order to save her life"; she reaffirmed the truth of her voices. Joan was now declared "a relapsed heretic ... as the dog returns to his vomit." "We denounce you as a rotten member, which, so that you shall not infect the other members of Christ, must be cast out of the unity of the Church." She defied her righteous accusers: "You will not do as you say against me without evil overtaking you, in body and soul."

The next day, May 30, Joan was led to Rouen's Old Market Place. A long sentence was read out, which concluded: "We, having Christ and the honour of the orthodox faith before our eyes, so that our judgment may seem to emanate from the face of Our Lord, have said and decreed that in the simulation of your revelations and apparitions you have been . . . a witch, a blasphemer of God and His saints . . . and that by these means you have rashly trespassed against God and the Holy Church. . . . . We abandon you . . . as a limb of Satan, infected with the leprosy of heresy, cut off from the Church." Joan was burned alive; she asked for a cross to be held close to her, and expired with loud cries of "Jesus." She was nineteen. Her ashes were thrown into the river Seine to prevent the collection of relics.

Joan's mission was fulfilled some twenty years later, when most of the regions occupied by England were recaptured. Historians agree that she catalyzed the awakening of French national consciousness; Michelet wrote in the nineteenth century, "May we always remember, we French people, that our motherland was born from the heart of a woman, from her tenderness and tears, from the blood she gave for us."

Charles VII, who had done precious little for Joan after being crowned, entered a liberated Rouen in 1449 and heard the popular resentment at the burning of Joan; perhaps he also spoke with a few churchmen who, deep down, disapproved of the trial for heresy. He ordered a retrial, which took place in 1455-56 and examined over a hundred direct witnesses; it concluded that Joan had died a martyr and rehabilitated her. It is mostly in the nineteenth century that the figure of Joan was glorified by more and more novelists and historians, beginning with Michelet; in 1874, under public censure, the Church started a process of canonization, which concluded in 1920: Joan was a saint after all. It had only taken the Church an execution by fire and five centuries to realize it.

# THE WITCH HUNTS: THE END OF MAGIC AND MIRACLES 1450-1750 CE

#### Helen Ellerbe

Helen Ellerbe, an American researcher and writer, is the author of an important and courageous book first published in 1995, The Dark Side of Christian History.\* In the introduction, she explains: "The Christian church has left a legacy, a world view, that permeates every aspect of Western society, both secular and religious. It is a legacy that fosters sexism, racism, the intolerance of difference, and the desecration of the natural environment. The Church, throughout much of its history, has demonstrated a disregard for human freedom, dignity, and self determination. It has attempted to control, contain and confine spirituality, the relationship between an individual and God. As a result, Christianity has helped to create a society in which people are alienated not only from each other but also from the divine."

To supplement the preceding article, we reproduce here a few extracts from the eighth chapter of Helen Ellerbe's book, which deals with the witch hunts, drawing from a wide variety of historical sources.

It took the Church a long time to persuade society that women were inclined toward evil witchcraft and devil-worship. Reversing its policy of denying the existence of witches, in the thirteenth century the Church began depicting the witch

<sup>\*</sup>The Dark Side of Christian History (Orlando: Morningstar & Lark, 1995).

as a slave of the devil.<sup>2</sup> No longer was she or he to be associated with an older pagan tradition. No longer was the witch to be thought of as benevolent healer, teacher, wise woman, or one who accessed divine power. She was now to be an evil satanic agent. The Church began authorizing frightening portrayals of the devil in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Images of a witch riding a broom first appeared in 1280.<sup>4</sup> Thirteenth century art also depicted the devil's pact in which demons would steal children and in which parents themselves would deliver their children to the devil.<sup>5</sup> The Church now portrayed witches with the same images so frequently used to characterize heretics: "... a small clandestine society engaged in anti-human practices, including infanticide, incest, cannibalism, bestiality and orgiastic sex..."<sup>6</sup>

... Pope John XXII formalized the persecution of witchcraft in 1320 when he authorized the Inquisition to prosecute sorcery. Thereafter papal bulls and declarations grew increasingly vehement in their condemnation of witchcraft and of all those who "made a pact with hell. "8 ... A papal bull in 1488 called upon the nations of Europe to rescue the Church of Christ which was "imperiled by the arts of Satan." The papacy and the Inquisition had successfully transformed the witch from a phenomenon whose existence the Church had previously rigorously denied into a phenomenon that was deemed very real, very frightening, the antithesis of Christianity, and absolutely deserving of persecution. . . .

The persecution of witchcraft enabled the Church to prolong the profitability of the Inquisition. The Inquisition had left regions so economically destitute that the inquisitor Eymeric complained, "In our days there are no more rich heretics... it is a pity that so salutary an institution as ours should be so uncertain of its future." By adding witchcraft to the crimes it persecuted, however, the Inquisition exposed a whole new group of people from whom to collect money. It took every advantage of this opportunity. The author Barbara Walker notes:

Victims were charged for the very ropes that bound them and the wood that burned them. Each procedure of torture carried its fee. After the execution of a wealthy witch, officials usually treated themselves to a banquet at the expense of the victim's estate.<sup>11</sup>

#### In 1592 Father Cornelius Loos wrote:

Wretched creatures are compelled by the severity of the torture to confess things they have never done... and so by the cruel butchery innocent lives are taken; and, by a new alchemy, gold and silver are coined from human blood.<sup>12</sup>

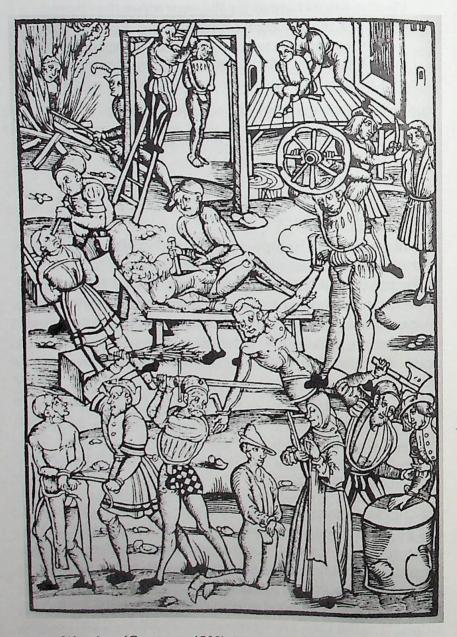
In many parts of Europe trials for witchcraft began exactly as the trials for other types of heresy stopped.<sup>13</sup>

The process of formally persecuting witches followed the harshest inquisitional procedure. Once accused of witchcraft, it was virtually impossible to escape conviction. After cross-examination, the victim's body was examined for the witch's mark. The historian Walter Nigg described the process:

... she was stripped naked and the executioner shaved off all her body hair in order to seek in the hidden places of the body the sign which the devil imprinted on his cohorts. Warts, freckles, and birthmarks were considered certain tokens of amorous relations with Satan.<sup>14</sup>

Should a woman show no sign of a witch's mark, guilt could still be established by methods such as sticking needles in the accused's eyes. In such a case, guilt was confirmed if the inquisitor could find an insensitive spot during the process. <sup>15</sup>

Confession was then extracted by the hideous methods of torture already developed during earlier phases of the Inquisition. "Loathe they are to confess without torture," wrote King James I in his *Daemonologie*. A physician serving in witch prisons spoke of women driven half mad:



Woodcut (Germany, 1508) showing various tortures and punishments for witches, including burning at the stake

... by frequent torture ... kept in prolonged squalor and darkness of their dungeons ... and constantly dragged out to undergo atrocious torment until they would gladly exchange at any moment this most bitter existence for death, are willing to confess whatever crimes are suggested to them rather than to be thrust back into their hideous dungeon amid ever recurring torture.<sup>17</sup>

Unless the witch died during torture, she was taken to the stake. Since many of the burnings took place in public squares, inquisitors prevented the victims from talking to the crowds by using wooden gags or cutting their tongue out. <sup>18</sup> Unlike a heretic or a Jew who would usually be burnt alive only after they had relapsed into their heresy or Judaism, a witch would be burnt upon the first conviction. <sup>19</sup>

Sexual mutilation of accused witches was not uncommon. With the orthodox understanding that divinity had little or nothing to do with the physical world, sexual desire was perceived to be ungodly. When the men persecuting the accused witches found themselves sexually aroused, they assumed that such desire emanated, not from themselves, but from the woman. They attacked breasts and genitals with pincers, pliers and red-hot irons. Some rules condoned sexual abuse by allowing men deemed "zealous Catholics" to visit female prisoners in solitary confinement while never allowing female visitors. The people of Toulouse were so convinced that the inquisitor Foulques de Saint-George arraigned women for no other reason than to sexually abuse them that they took the dangerous and unusual step of gathering evidence against him.<sup>20</sup>

The horror of the witch hunts knew no bounds. The Church had never treated the children of persecuted parents with compassion, but its treatment of witches' children was particularly brutal. Children were liable to be prosecuted and tortured for witchcraft: girls, once they were nine and a half, and boys, once they were ten and a half.<sup>21</sup> Younger children

were tortured in order to elicit testimony that could be used against their parents.<sup>22</sup> Even the testimony of two-year-old children was considered valid in cases of witchcraft though such testimony was never admissible in other types of trials.<sup>23</sup> A famous French magistrate was known to have regretted his leniency when, instead of having young children accused of witchcraft burned, he had only sentenced them to be flogged while they watched their parents burn.<sup>24</sup>

Witches were held accountable for nearly every problem. Any threat to social uniformity, any questioning of authority, and any act of rebellion could now be attributed to and prosecuted as witchcraft. Not surprisingly, areas of political turmoil and religious strife experienced the most intense witch hunts. Witch-hunting tended to be much more severe in Germany, Switzerland, France, Poland and Scotland than in more homogeneously Catholic countries such as Italy and Spain. Witch-hunters declared that "Rebellion is as the sin of Witchcraft." In 1661 Scottish royalists proclaimed that "Rebellion is the mother of witchcraft." And in England the Puritan William Perkins called the witch "The most notorious traytor and rebell that can be ..."

The Reformation played a critical role in convincing people to blame witches for their problems. Protestants and reformed Catholics taught that any magic was sinful since it indicated a belief in divine assistance in the physical world. The only supernatural energy in the physical world was to be of the devil. Without magic to counter evil or misfortune, people were left with no form of protection other than to kill the devil's agent, the witch. Particularly in Protestant countries, where protective rituals such as crossing oneself, sprinkling holy water or calling on saints or guardian angels were no longer allowed, people felt defenseless.<sup>29</sup>...

It was most often the sermons of both Catholic and Protestant preachers that would instigate a witch hunt. The terrible Basque witch hunt of 1610 began after Fray Domingo de Sardo came to preach about witchcraft. "There were neither



Three witches being burnt in Germany in 1555 (note the female dragon-like devil escaping from one of them)

witches nor bewitched until they were talked and written about," remarked a contemporary named Salazar.<sup>30</sup> The witch hunts in Salem, Massachusetts, were similarly preceded by the fearful sermons and preaching of Samuel Parris in 1692.<sup>31</sup>

The climate of fear created by churchmen of the Reformation led to countless deaths of accused witches quite independently of inquisitional courts or procedure. For example, in England where there were no inquisitional courts and where witch-hunting offered little or no financial reward, many women were killed for witchcraft by mobs. Instead of following any judicial procedure, these mobs used methods to ascertain guilt of witchcraft such as "swimming a witch," where a woman would be bound and thrown into water to see if she floated. The water, as the medium of baptism, would either reject her and prove her guilty of witchcraft, or the woman would sink and be proven innocent, albeit also dead from drowning.<sup>32</sup>

As people adopted the new belief that the world was the

terrifying realm of the devil, they blamed witches for every misfortune. Since the devil created all the ills of the world, his agents — witches — could be blamed for them. Witches were thought by some to have as much if not more power than Christ: they could raise the dead, turn water into wine or milk, control the weather and know the past and future. Witches were held accountable for everything from a failed business venture to a poor emotional state. A Scottish woman, for instance, was accused of witchcraft and burned to death because she was seen stroking a cat at the same time as a nearby batch of beer turned sour. Witches now took the role of scapegoats that had been held by Jews. Any personal misfortune, bad harvest, famine, or plague was seen as their fault. . . .

The most common victims of witchcraft accusations were those women who resembled the image of the Crone.\* As the embodiment of mature feminine power, the old wise woman threatens a structure which acknowledges only force and domination as avenues of power. The Church never tolerated the image of the Crone, even in the first centuries when it assimilated the prevalent images of maiden and mother in the figure of Mary. Although any woman who attracted attention was likely to be suspected of witchcraft, either on account of her beauty or because of a noticeable oddness or deformity, the most common victim was the old woman. Poor, older women tended to be the first accused even where witch hunts were driven by inquisitional procedure that profited by targeting wealthier individuals.

Old, wise healing women were particular targets for witch-hunters. "At this day," wrote Reginald Scot in 1584, "it is indifferent to say in the English tongue, 'she is a witch' or 'she is a wise woman.' "35 Common people of pre-reformational Europe relied upon wise women and men for the treatment of illness rather than upon churchmen, monks or physicians.

<sup>\*</sup> An ugly, withered old woman or hag; this became the stereotype of the witch in popular imagination. (Eds.)

#### Robert Burton wrote in 1621:

Sorcerers are too common; cunning men, wizards and white witches, as they call them, in every village, which, if they be sought unto, will help almost all infirmities of body and mind.<sup>36</sup>

By combining their knowledge of medicinal herbs with an entreaty for divine assistance, these healers provided both more affordable and most often more effective medicine than was available elsewhere. Churchmen of the Reformation objected to the magical nature of this sort of healing, to the preference people had for it over the healing that the Church or Church-licensed physicians offered, and to the power that it gave women.

Until the terror of the witch hunts, most people did not understand why successful healers should be considered evil. "Men rather uphold them," wrote John Stearne, "and say why should any man be questioned for doing good."<sup>37</sup> As a Bridgettine monk of the early sixteenth century recounted of "the simple people," "I have heard them say full often myself... 'Sir, we mean well and do believe well and we think it a good and charitable deed to heal a sick person or a sick beast'..."<sup>38</sup> And in 1555 Joan Tyrry asserted that "her doings in healing of man and beast, by the power of God taught to her by the... fairies, be both godly and good."<sup>39</sup> ...

But in the eyes of orthodox Christians, such healing empowered people to determine the course of their lives instead of submitting helplessly to the will of God. According to churchmen, health should come from God, not from the efforts of human beings. Bishop Hall said, "we that have no power to bid must pray ..."<sup>40</sup> Ecclesiastical courts made the customers of witches publicly confess to being "heartily sorry for seeking man's help, and refusing the help of God ..."<sup>41</sup> An Elizabethan preacher explained that any healing "is not done by conjuration or divination, as Popish priests profess and practice, but by entreating the Lord humbly in fasting and

prayer ..."<sup>42</sup> And according to Calvin, no medicine could change the course of events which had already been determined by the Almighty.<sup>43</sup>

Preachers and Church-licensed male physicians tried to fill the function of healer. Yet, their ministrations were often considered ineffective compared to those of a wise woman. The keeper of the Canterbury gaol admitted to freeing an imprisoned wise woman in 1570 because "the witch did more good by her physic than Mr. Pudall and Mr. Wood, being preachers of God's word ..." A character in the 1593 *Dialogue concerning Witches* said of a local wise woman that, "she doeth more good in one year than all these scripture men will do so long as they live..."

Even the Church-licensed male physicians, who relied upon purgings, bleedings, fumigations, leeches, lancets and toxic chemicals such as mercury were little match for an experienced wise woman's knowledge of herbs. <sup>46</sup> As the well-known physician, Paracelsus, asked, "... does not the old nurse very often beat the doctor?" Even Francis Bacon, who demonstrated very little respect for women, thought that "empirics and old women" were "more happy many times in their cures than learned physicians." <sup>48</sup> ...

Not surprisingly, churchmen portrayed the healing woman as the most evil of all witches. William Perkins declared, "The most horrible and detestable monster . . . is the good witch." The Church included in its definition of witchcraft anyone with knowledge of herbs for "those who used herbs for cures did so only through a pact with the Devil, either explicit or implicit." Medicine had long been associated with herbs and magic. The Greek and Latin words for medicine, pharmakeia and veneficium, meant both "magic" and "drugs." Mere possession of herbal oils or ointments became grounds for accusation of witchcraft.

A person's healing ability easily led to conviction of witchcraft. In 1590 a woman in North Berwick was suspected of witchcraft because she was curing "all such as were troubled or grieved with any kind of sickness or infirmity."<sup>53</sup> The ailing archbishop of St. Andrews called upon Alison Peirsoun of Byrehill and then, after she had successfully cured him, not only refused to pay her but had her arrested for witchcraft and burned to death.<sup>54</sup> Simply treating unhealthy children by washing them was cause for convicting a Scottish woman of witchcraft.<sup>55</sup>

Witch-hunters also targeted midwives. Orthodox Christians believed the act of giving birth defiled both mother and child. In order to be readmitted to the Church, the mother should be purified through the custom of "churching," which consisted of a quarantine period of forty days if her baby was a boy and eighty days if her baby was a girl, during which both she and her baby were considered heathen. Some thought that a woman who died during this period should be refused a Christian burial. Until the Reformation, midwives were deemed necessary to take care of what was regarded as the nasty business of giving birth, a dishonorable profession best left in the hands of women. But with the Reformation came an increased awareness of the power of midwives. Midwives were now suspected of possessing the skill to abort a fetus, to educate women about techniques of birth control, and to mitigate a woman's labor pains.56

A midwife's likely knowledge of herbs to relieve labor pains was seen as a direct affront to the divinely ordained pain of childbirth. In the eyes of churchmen, God's sentence upon Eve should apply to all women. . . . To relieve labor pains, as Scottish clergymen put it, would be "vitiating the primal curse of woman. . . "57 The introduction of chloroform to help a woman through the pain of labor brought forth the same opposition. According to a New England minister:

Chloroform [an early anaesthetic] is a decoy of Satan, apparently offering itself to bless women; but in the end it will harden society and rob God of the deep earnest cries which arise in time of trouble, for help.<sup>58</sup>

Martin Luther wrote, "If [women] become tired or even die, that does not matter. Let them die in childbirth that is why they are there." It is hardly surprising that women who not only possessed medicinal knowledge but who used that knowledge to comfort and care for other women would become prime suspects of witchcraft.

How many lives were lost during the centuries of witch-hunting will never be known. Some members of the clergy proudly reported the number of witches they condemned, such as the bishop of Wurtzburg who claimed 1900 lives in five years, or the Lutheran prelate Benedict Carpzov who claimed to have sentenced 20,000 devil worshipers. But the vast majority of records have been lost and it is doubtful that such documents would have recorded those killed outside of the courts.

Contemporary accounts hint at the extent of the holocaust. Barbara Walker writes that "the chronicler of Treves [or Trier, in Germany] reported that in the year 1586, the entire female population of two villages was wiped out by the inquisitors, except for only two women left alive."<sup>61</sup> Around 1600 a man wrote:

Germany is almost entirely occupied with building fires for the witches... Switzerland has been compelled to wipe out many of her villages on their account. Travelers in Lorraine may see thousands and thousands of the stakes to which witches are bound.<sup>62</sup>

While the formal persecution of witches raged from about 1450 to 1750, sporadic killing of women on the account of suspected witchcraft has continued into recent times. In 1928 a family of Hungarian peasants was acquitted of beating an old woman to death whom they claimed was a witch. The court based its decision on the ground that the family had acted out of "irresistible compulsion." In 1976 a poor spinster, Elizabeth Hahn, was suspected of witchcraft and of keeping familiars, or devil's agents, in the form of dogs. The neighbors

in her small German village ostracized her, threw rocks at her, and threatened to beat her to death before burning her house, badly burning her and killing her animals.<sup>64</sup> A year later in France, an old man was killed for ostensible sorcery.<sup>65</sup> And in 1981, a mob in Mexico stoned a woman to death for her apparent witchcraft which they believed had incited the attack upon Pope John Paul II.<sup>66</sup>

Witch hunts were neither small in scope nor implemented by a few aberrant individuals; the persecution of witches was the official policy of both the Catholic and Protestant Churches.<sup>67</sup> The Church invented the crime of witchcraft, established the process by which to prosecute it, and then insisted that witches be prosecuted. After much of society had rejected witchcraft as a delusion, some of the last to insist upon the validity of witchcraft were among the clergy.<sup>68</sup> Under the pretext of first heresy and then witchcraft, anyone could be disposed of who questioned authority or the Christian view of the world.

Witch-hunting secured the conversion of Europe to orthodox Christianity. Through the terror of the witch hunts, reformational Christians convinced common people to believe that a singular male God reigned from above, that he was separate from the earth, that magic was evil, that there was a powerful devil, and that women were most likely to be his agents. As a by-product of the witch hunts, the field of medicine transferred to exclusively male hands and the Western herbal tradition was largely destroyed. The vast numbers of people brutalized and killed, as well as the impact upon the common perception of God, make the witch hunts one of the darkest chapters of human history.

#### 80 CB

#### References

1. This chapter 8 was till recently available online at http://65.109.176.35/

- warmcove/morningstar/chapter8.html and has been reproduced on several websites.
- 2. Julio Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 81.
- 3. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, Early Modern European Witchcraft Centres and Peripheries (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 25.
- 4. Jeffrey Burton Russel, Witchcraft in the Middle Ages (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1972) 164.
- 5. Ibid., 134.
- Margot Adler, Drawing Down the Moon (New York: Beacon Press, 1979) 49.
- 7. Jeffrey Burton Russel, A History of Medieval Christianity (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1968) 173.
- 8. Ibid., 173.
- 9. Montague Summers, The History of Witchcraft and Demonology New York: New Hyde Park, 1956) 12.
- 10. Rossel Hope Robbins, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology (New York: Bonanza Books, 1981) 271.
- 11. Barbara Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 1086.
- 12. Robbins, The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 16.
- 13. Brian P. Levak, The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe (London: Longman, 1987) 110.
- 14. Walter Nigg, The Heretics: Heresy Through the Ages (New York: Dorset Press, 1962) 281.
- 15. Baroja, The World of Witches, 168-169.
- 16. Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974) 502.
- 17. Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 1004.
- 18. Ibid., 445.
- 19. Russel, Witchcraft in the Middle Ages, 151.
- 20. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, 445-46.
- 21. Ibid., 445.
- 22. Ibid., 1004.
- 23. Robbins, The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 229.
- 24. Ibid., 4.
- 25. Levak, The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe, 105.
- 26. Ibid., 59.
- 27. Ibid., 59.
- 28. Ibid., 59.
- 29. Levak, The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe, 102, and Thomas,

Religion and the Decline of Magic, 493-495.

- 30. Levak, The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe, 149-150.
- 31. Ibid., 150.
- 32. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, 551, and Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, 1008.
- 33. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, 1083.
- 34. Robbins, The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 4.
- 35. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, 436.
- 36. Ibid., 177.
- 37. Ibid., 265-266.
- 38. Ibid., 266.
- 39. Ibid., 266.
- 40. Ibid., 479.
- 41. Ibid., 265.
- 42. Ibid., 479.
- 43. Ibid., 85.
- 44. Ibid., 264.
- 45. Ibid., 264.
- 46. Jeanne Achterberg, Woman As Healer (Boston: Shambala, 1991) 105.
- 47. Ibid., 106.
- 48. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, 14.
- 49. Robbins, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 540.
- 50. Ibid., 540.
- 51. John T. Noonan, Jr., *Contraception* (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1965) 42.
- 52. Achterberg, Woman As Healer, 92.
- 53. Robbins, The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 540.
- 54. Baroja, The World of Witches, 125.
- 55. Robbins, The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 4.
- 56. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, 655.
- 57. Ibid., 656.
- 58. Ibid., 656.
- 59. Karen Armstrong, The Gospel According to Woman: Christianity's Creation of the Sex War in the West (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 69.
- 60. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, 444.
- 61. Ibid., 444.
- 62. Robbins, The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 4-5.
- 63. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, 1087.
- 64. Levak, The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe, 229.
- 65. Ibid., 229.
- 66. Ibid., 229.
- 67. Robbins, The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, 17.
- 68. Ibid., 17.

# Christianity in America

In 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail across the Atlantic, hoping to find a westward sea route to China and India. His mission, supported by Spain's monarchs Ferdinand II and Isabella I, aimed at evangelization and colonization. Columbus wrote in his journal, "Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians, and princes who love and promote the holy Christian faith, and are enemies of the doctrine of Mahomet, and of all idolatry and heresy, determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the above-mentioned countries of India, to see the said princes, people, and territories, and to learn their disposition and the proper method of converting them to our holy faith." So holy that Columbus behaved like "a cruel and greedy tyrant with a brutal disregard for humanity," according to historians commenting on documents recently discovered at Valladolid (north-western Spain), where he died 500 years ago. But the twin objectives of evangelization and colonization were amply fulfilled in the following decades, in the form of vast riches and the Christianization of all natives.

From the latter's point of view, however, the picture was very different: they lost their land, their freedom, their honour, their lives, and their culture. As soon as they set foot on the "New World," colonizers indulged in unspeakable cruelty on those they called "Indians." In his 1906 Christopher Columbus and the New World of his Discovery, historian Filson Young wrote: "Lust and bloody cruelty, of a kind not merely indescribable but unrealisable by sane men and women, drenched the once happy island [Hispaniola] with anguish and terror. And in payment for it the Spaniards undertook to teach the heathen the Christian religion." Young then narrates the courageous but hopeless rebellion by a few Indian chiefs, which resulted in the wholesale slaughter of their clans. "After that," he continues, "there was never any more resistance; it was simply a case of extermination, which the Spaniards easily

accomplished by cutting of the heads of women as they passed by, and impaling infants and little children on their lances as they rode through the villages. Thus, in the twelve years since the discovery of Columbus, between half a million and a million natives, perished; and as the Spanish colonisation spread afterwards from island to island, and the banner of civilisation and Christianity was borne farther abroad throughout the Indies, the same hideous process was continued. In Cuba, in Jamaica, throughout the Antilles, the cross and the sword, the whip-lash and the Gospel advanced together; wherever the Host was consecrated, hideous cries of agony and suffering broke forth; until happily, in the fullness of time, the dire business was complete, and the whole of the people who had inhabited this garden of the world were exterminated and their blood and race wiped from the face of the earth."

A few voices of protest were heard, notably that of the Spanish priest *Bartolemé de Las Casas* (see the following article, "Destruction of the Indies"), who rightly traced the atrocities to greed: "The reason why the Christians have killed and destroyed such an infinite number of souls is that they have been moved by their wish for gold and their desire to enrich themselves in a very short time." Colonization was, he wrote, "born in blood and fire," and he feared that Spain — even the Church — may have to suffer divine retribution for the black deeds of the conquistadors.

Pizzaro with the Incas of Peru continued the streak of bloodshed, with varying degrees, and always with the Bible in hand. Aztec labourers were worked to death in Mexico's gold mines; in Oaxaca, the principal mining town, "the ground was so bleached with human bones that one could not go in that direction without stepping upon skeletons." Historian Edward Dahlberg wrote in The Gold of Ophir: "Pedro de Alvarado, the lieutenant of Cortés, annihilated four to five million [Mayan] natives in the peninsula of Guatemala and Yucatan within a few years. . . . Do Soto lopped off the heads of Indian

couriers because he was too fatigued to remove their iron collars. Gonzalo Pizarro [half brother of Francisco] threw numerous Incas to the dogs. ... " In The Conquest of America, Tzvetan Todorov writes: "If the word genocide has ever been applied to a situation with some accuracy, this is here the case. It constitutes a record not only in relative terms (a destruction on the order of 90 percent or more), but also in absolute terms, since we are speaking of a population diminution estimated at 70 million human lives. None of the great massacres of the twentieth century can be compared to this hecatomb." Besides the Spanish, other colonizers from western Europe took part in the bloody conquest. Along with human lives, culture was snuffed out: thousands of Mayan codices (manuscripts) were consigned to the flames as they could only be the work of the devil. The environment also suffered, with forests laid waste and traditional agriculture destroyed.

Historian David Stannard uses a similar language in his American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World (1992): "The destruction of the Indians of the Americas was, far and away, the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world." Stannard advances 100 million as the number of indigenous victims right up to the nineteenth century; asking "What kind of people do such horrendous things to others?," he answers squarely: Christians, tracing the problem to their attitudes towards sex, race and war. Claims of racial superiority as well as exclusive ownership of the truth in the form of Christianity certainly provided convenient pretexts to the colonizers.

In fact, back in Spain, to justify the treatment of Amerindians, an influential Jesuit maintained that they were "inferior to the Spaniards just as children are to adults, women to men, and, indeed, one might even say, as apes are to men." Some asserted that they had no soul, while others were sure they had no intelligence. In view of Catholic theology, therefore, Indians were born slaves (similar arguments will later be used towards the Blacks). Las Casas again rose to the occasion and confronted these views in 1550 at the famous *Council of* 

Valladolid. Arguments were heard by theologians for over a year, during which Las Casas hammered the point that "All the nations of the world are human and all share in the same definition: they are rational beings. All have intellect and will, as created in God's image and similitude." Las Casas resolutely went against the colonial stream, and eventually won the debate through his learning and deep conviction that Native Americans had a right to be treated as free men. Though it would make little immediate difference to their lives, it was an important victory in the realm of humanist ideas.

At the age of eighty-one, still gnawed by anguish at the fate of Amerindians, Las Casas wrote to the Pope boldly demanding his urgent intervention to restore their rights, as the suffering inflicted on them may otherwise bring about "the damnation and destruction of the Church." He asked the Pope to excommunicate "all those who affirm that wars against the infidels are just if waged to combat idolatry, or for the convenience of spreading the Gospel, specially in regard to those infidels who have never injured or are not injuring us." (See the full text of this letter after "Destruction of the Indies.")

CB

# **DESTRUCTION OF THE INDIES**

Bartolemé de Las Casas (1484 -1566)

The author, a Spanish missionary, first travelled to the West Indies in 1502, soon after its "discovery" by Columbus and the first waves of Spanish colonization. Although he wanted native Indians to become Christians, he was horrified by the brutal tortures and slaughters inflicted on them by his countrymen in the West Indies and Central America. He wrote a powerful testimony, Brevisima Relacion de la destruicion de las Indias ("A Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies"), a few extracts of which are presented here. Spending some forty years in the Americas, he visited Spain now and then to plead the cause of the native Indians. In 1542, he obtained the passing of "New Laws" which abolished slavery among Indians and prescribed punishments for their aggressors; there was, however, considerable opposition to their application by the colonizers. Las Casas was made Bishop of Chiapas a few years before his final return to Spain in 1547, where he wrote several important studies, including a monumental History of the Indies. See the preceding box, "Christianity in America," for his role in defence of Indians after his return to Spain.

The Indies were discovered in the year 1492. In the following year a great many Spaniards went there with the intention of settling the land. Thus, forty-nine years have passed since the first settlers penetrated the land, the first so claimed being the large and most happy isle called Hispaniola,\* which is six hundred leagues in circumference. Around it in all directions

<sup>\*</sup>The second largest island in the West Indies, located east of Cuba. Today it is divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. (Eds.)



Detail of a painting of Bartolomé de las Casas

are many other islands, some very big, others very small, and all of them were, as we saw with our own eyes, densely populated with native peoples called Indians. This large island was perhaps the most densely populated place in the world. There must be close to two hundred leagues of land on this island, and the seacoast has been explored for more than ten thousand leagues, and each day more of it is being explored. And all the land so far discovered is a beehive of people; it is as though God had

crowded into these lands the great majority of mankind.

And of all the infinite universe of humanity, these people are the most guileless, the most devoid of wickedness and duplicity, the most obedient and faithful to their native masters and to the Spanish Christians whom they serve. They are by nature the most humble, patient, and peaceable, holding no grudges, free from embroilments, neither excitable nor quarrelsome. These people are the most devoid of rancour, hatreds, or desire for vengeance of any people in the world. And because they are so weak and complaisant, they are less able to endure heavy labour and soon die of no matter what malady. The sons of nobles among us, brought up in the enjoyments of life's refinements, are no more delicate than are these Indians, even those among them who are of the lowest rank of labourers. They are also poor people, for they not only possess little but have no desire to possess worldly goods. For this reason they are not arrogant, embittered, or greedy. Their repasts are such that the food of the holy fathers in the desert can scarcely be more parsimonious, scanty, and poor. As to their dress, they are generally naked, with only their pudenda covered somewhat. And when they cover their shoulders it is with a square cloth no more than two varas in size. They have no beds, but sleep on a kind of matting or else in a kind of suspended net called bamacas. They are very clean in their persons, with alert, intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine, very apt to receive our holy Catholic faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs, and to behave in a godly fashion. And once they begin to hear the tidings of the Faith, they are so insistent on knowing more and on taking the sacraments of the Church and on observing the divine cult that, truly, the missionaries who are here need to be endowed by God with great patience in order to cope with such eagerness. Some of the secular Spaniards who have been here for many years say that the goodness of the Indians is undeniable and that if this gifted people could be brought to know the one true God they would be the most fortunate people in the world.

Yet into this sheepfold, into this land of meek outcasts there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravening wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days. And Spaniards have behaved in no other way during the past forty years, down to the present time, for they are still acting like ravening beasts, killing, terrorizing, afflicting, torturing, and destroying the native peoples, doing all this with the strangest and most varied new methods of cruelty, never seen or heard of before, and to such a degree that this Island of Hispaniola once so populous (having a population that I estimated to be more than three million), has now a population of barely two hundred persons.

The island of Cuba is nearly as long as the distance between Valladolid and Rome; it is now almost completely depopulated. San Juan [Puerto Rico] and Jamaica are two of the largest, most productive and attractive islands; both are now deserted and devastated. On the northern side of Cuba and Hispaniola are the neighbouring Lucayos comprising more than sixty islands including those called Gigantes, beside numerous other islands, some small some large. The least felicitous of them were more fertile and beautiful than the

gardens of the King of Seville. They have the healthiest lands in the world, where lived more than five hundred thousand souls; they are now deserted, inhabited by not a single living creature. All the people were slain or died after being taken into captivity and brought to the Island of Hispaniola to be sold as slaves. When the Spaniards saw that some of these had escaped, they sent a ship to find them, and it voyaged for three years among the islands searching for those who had escaped being slaughtered, for a good Christian had helped them escape, taking pity on them and had won them over to Christ; of these there were eleven persons and these I saw.

More than thirty other islands in the vicinity of San Juan are for the most part and for the same reason depopulated, and the land laid waste. On these islands I estimate there are 2,100 leagues of land that have been ruined and depopulated, empty of people.

As for the vast mainland, which is ten times larger than all Spain, even including Aragon and Portugal, containing more land than the distance between Seville and Jerusalem, or more than two thousand leagues, we are sure that our Spaniards, with their cruel and abominable acts, have devastated the land and exterminated the rational people who fully inhabited it. We can estimate very surely and truthfully that in the forty years that have passed, with the infernal actions of the Christians, there have been unjustly slain more than twelve million men, women, and children. In truth, I believe without trying to deceive myself that the number of the slain is more like fifteen million.\*

The common ways mainly employed by the Spaniards who

<sup>\*</sup>Some have accused de Las Casas of "exaggeration" for this statement, or suggested that many of the victims might have died of diseases brought by the Spaniards (such as smallpox), against which they had no defences. Even if this additional cause of depopulation is accepted, it in no way diminishes the monstrosity of the tortures and slaughters inflicted on the native population. De Las Casas gained nothing by "exaggerating" them, except the hostility of his countrymen. (Eds.)

call themselves Christian and who have gone there to extirpate those pitiful nations and wipe them off the earth is by unjustly waging cruel and bloody wars. Then, when they have slain all those who fought for their lives or to escape the tortures they would have to endure, that is to say, when they have slain all the native rulers and young men (since the Spaniards usually spare only the women and children, who are subjected to the hardest and bitterest servitude ever suffered by man or beast), they enslave any survivors. With these infernal methods of tyranny they debase and weaken countless numbers of those pitiful Indian nations.

Their reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to swell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies. And also, those lands are so rich and felicitous, the native peoples so meek and patient, so easy to subject, that our Spaniards have no more consideration for them than beasts. And I say this from my own knowledge of the acts I witnessed. But I should not say "than beasts" for, thanks be to God, they have treated beasts with some respect; I should say instead like excrement on the public squares. And thus they have deprived the Indians of their lives and souls, for the millions I mentioned have died without the Faith and without the benefit of the sacraments. This is a well-known and proven fact which even the tyrant Governors, themselves killers, know and admit. And never have the Indians in all the Indies committed any act against the Spanish Christians, until those Christians have first and many times committed countless cruel aggressions against them or against neighbouring nations. For in the beginning the Indians regarded the Spaniards as angels from Heaven. Only after the Spaniards had used violence against them, killing, robbing, torturing, did the Indians ever rise up against them....



A sketch of 1589 depicting the hanging and burning of Native Americans by Spaniards; a baby is about to be smashed against a rock; slaughter takes place in the background.

On the island Hispaniola was where the Spaniards first landed, as I have said. Here those Christians perpetrated their first ravages and oppressions against the native peoples. This was the first land in the New World to be destroyed and depopulated by the Christians, and here they began their subjection of the women and children, taking them away from the Indians to use them and ill use them, eating the food they provided with their sweat and toil. The Spaniards did not content themselves with what the Indians gave them of their own free will, according to their ability, which was always too little to satisfy enormous appetites, for a Christian eats and consumes in one day an amount of food that would suffice to feed three houses inhabited by ten Indians for one month. And they committed other acts of force and violence

and oppression which made the Indians realize that these men had not come from Heaven. And some of the Indians concealed their foods while others concealed their wives and children and still others fled to the mountains to avoid the terrible transactions of the Christians.

And the Christians attacked them with buffets and beatings, until finally they laid hands on the nobles of the villages. Then they behaved with such temerity and shamelessness that the most powerful ruler of the islands had to see his own wife raped by a Christian officer.

From that time onward the Indians began to seek ways to throw the Christians out of their lands. They took up arms, but their weapons were very weak and of little service in offence and still less in defence. (Because of this, the wars of the Indians against each other are little more than games played by children.) And the Christians, with their horses and swords and pikes began to carry out massacres and strange cruelties against them. They attacked the towns and spared neither the children nor the aged nor pregnant women nor women in childbed, not only stabbing them and dismembering them but cutting them to pieces as if dealing with sheep in the slaughter house. They laid bets as to who, with one stroke of the sword, could split a man in two or could cut off his head or spill out his entrails with a single stroke of the pike. They took infants from their mothers' breasts, snatching them by the legs and pitching them headfirst against the crags or snatched them by the arms and threw them into the rivers, roaring with laughter and saying as the babies fell into the water, "Boil there, you offspring of the devil!" Other infants they put to the sword along with their mothers and anyone else who happened to be nearby. They made some low wide gallows on which the hanged victim's feet almost touched the ground, stringing up their victims in lots of thirteen, in memory of Our Redeemer and His twelve Apostles, then set burning wood at their feet and thus burned them alive. To others they attached straw or wrapped their whole bodies in

straw and set them afire. With still others, all those they wanted to capture alive, they cut off their hands and hung them round the victim's neck, saying, "Go now, carry the message," meaning, Take the news to the Indians who have fled to the mountains. They usually dealt with the chieftains and nobles in the following way: they made a grid of rods which they placed on forked sticks, then lashed the victims to the grid and lighted a smouldering fire underneath, so that little by little, as those captives screamed in despair and torment, their souls would leave them....

After the wars and the killings had ended, when usually there survived only some boys, some women, and children, these survivors were distributed among the Christians to be slaves. The repartimiento or distribution was made according to the rank and importance of the Christian to whom the Indians were allocated, one of them being given thirty, another forty, still another, one or two hundred, and besides the rank of the Christian there was also to be considered in what favour he stood with the tyrant they called Governor. The pretext was that these allocated Indians were to be instructed in the articles of the Christian Faith. As if those Christians who were as a rule foolish and cruel and greedy and vicious could be caretakers of souls! And the care they took was to send the men to the mines to dig for gold, which is intolerable labour, and to send the women into the fields of the big ranches to hoe and till the land, work suitable for strong men. Nor to either the men or the women did they give any food except herbs and legumes, things of little substance. The milk in the breasts of the women with infants dried up and thus in a short while the infants perished. And since men and women were separated, there could be no marital relations. And the men died in the mines and the women died on the ranches from the same causes, exhaustion and hunger. And thus was depopulated that island which had been densely populated.

## PETITION TO HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS V

A few months before his death in July 1566, Las Casas wrote a strong letter to the Pope, bypassing all prescribed channels, and plainly stating the Church's complicity in the genocide of American natives. His letter, spelling out corrective steps to be urgently adopted, was in effect a challenge to the Vatican, a challenge that was never taken up. (The English translation of this letter is by Luis N. Rivera-Pagan in his Essays From the Diaspora.)

What things are necessary for the correct way of preaching the Gospel to the infidels, and to render just and legitimate the wars against them, I have declared in the book that I sent to Your Beatitude, and I hope to expand them further. To Your Beatitude I beseech intensively, by the blood of our Redemption, to command that my book be examined and, if found right, that it be stamped, so that the truth be not hidden for the damnation and destruction of the Church, as the time may come (which might be already at hand) in which God unveils our blemishes and our nakedness is shown to the whole pagan world.

Since so many are the flatterers who in secret, like dogs with rabies, bark against the truth, to Your Beatitude I humbly beseech that a decree be enacted in which are declared excommunicated and anathema, all those who affirm that wars against the infidels are just if waged to combat idolatry, or for the convenience of spreading the Gospel, specially in regard to those infidels who have never injured or are not injuring us. Or those who assert that the infidels are not true lords and owners of their properties; or those who affirm that they are unable to understand and receive the Gospel and eternal salvation, on the basis of their alleged lack of intelligence or acuity of mind, which in fact they do not lack, those Indians whose rights I have defended till my death, for the honour of God and the Church. In my book I have clearly shown that

all those assertions are against the sacred canons, as well as against natural law and the commandments of the Gospel, and I will confirm it even more, if that were possible, for I have exhaustively researched and corroborated this matter.

As experience, teacher of all things, confirms that in these times it is necessary to renew all the canons that command the bishops to take care of the captives, of afflicted men and widows, even to the point in which their blood might be shed for them, as they are obliged by natural and divine law, to Your Beatitude I humbly beseech that, by the renewal of those canons, order the bishops of the Indies that, under holy obedience, they be concerned about those natives, who, with hard labours and tyrannies (more than what it could be believed), carry on their meagre shoulders, against all natural and divine law, a heavy yoke and unbearable load, which makes it necessary that Your Holiness instruct those bishops to defend their cause, becoming a protecting wall for them, even to spill their own blood, as by divine law they are obliged, and that in no way they accept their appointment, if the King and his Council would not support them and uproot so many tyrannies and oppressions.

Openly and unjustly the bishop ignores the language of his subjects, and does not attempt to learn it well. Therefore, I humbly beseech Your Beatitude to order them to master the language of their sheep, showing that they are so commanded by divine and natural law, for at the moment many awful indignities occur in the presence of Your Holiness, caused by the negligence of the bishops in learning the language of their parishioners.

Immense scandal and no less detriment to our most holy religion is that in such a new place bishops and friars and priests are getting rich and live sumptuously, while their recently converted subjects remain in so great and incredible poverty, that many of them die daily in profound misery, due to the tyranny, hunger and excessive work that they suffer. Therefore, to Your Holiness I humbly beseech to declare those ministers

to be obliged by natural and divine law, as in fact they are, to return all the gold, silver, and precious stones they have acquired, for their wealth is taken from human beings who endure extreme need and who today live in misery, with whom, by divine and natural law, they are even beholden to share their own possessions.

क्ष ज्य

# Swami Vivekananda on the spread of Christianity

Old questions arise: Christianity must be the only true religion of the world, because Christian nations are prosperous! But that assertion contradicts itself, because the prosperity of the Christian nation depends on the misfortune of non-Christian nations. There must be some to prey on. Suppose the whole world were to become Christian, then the Christian nations would become poor, because there would be no non-Christian nations for them to prey upon. Thus the argument kills itself.

Complete Works (1990), II.95

We who have come from the east have sat here day after day and have been told to accept Christianity because Christian nations are the most prosperous. We look about us and see England the most prosperous Christian nation in the world, with her foot on the neck of 250 million Asiatic. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain's prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellow men. At such a price the Hindu will not have prosperity. I have sat here and heard the height of intolerance. . . . Blood and sword are not for the Hindu, whose religion is based on the laws of love.

(As reported in *The Dubuque Times*, Iowa, 29 September 1893)

Complete Works (1990), III.474

# Huge 1,500-year-old pyramid discovered in Mexico

The latest of the many archaeologically documented examples of destruction of Mesoamerican sacred sites by advancing Christianity.

MEXICO CITY (Reuters), April 5, 2006 – Archeologists have discovered a huge 1,500-year-old pre-Hispanic pyramid in a working class district of Mexico City after digging into a hill used every year to depict the crucifixion of Christ.

The unnamed pyramid has the same sized base as the giant Pyramid of the Moon at the famous archeological site of Teotihuacan, an hour's drive northeast of the capital, which is known as the "City of the Gods" and is Mexico's biggest ancient city.

Archeologist Jesus Sanchez said on Wednesday the latest find was built by the same people who constructed Teotihuacan between AD 400 and 500, and has evidence that it was used for ceremonial purposes.

"The structure is protected because it is beneath two feet of earth," Sanchez told a radio station.

But half the pyramid has been destroyed as the hill has been used for decades every Easter for a gory re-enactment of the crucifixion of Christ. The religious celebration is attended by hundreds of thousands of believers.

Houses built illegally on one side of the hill have also damaged the pyramid, which is about 60 feet tall, half the height of the Pyramid of the Moon, said Sanchez, archeologist with the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

The site will not be fully explored because it is now considered a religious center in its own right, Sanchez said.

The north side of the pyramid opens out into a large square, whose limits are defined by a low stone wall. On the south

side there is another small temple, with evidence of holes in the walls for offerings to be placed.

The site overlooks a vast suburban neighborhood, considered one of Mexico City's poorest and most dangerous. A periphery fence is to be built around it to stop vehicles from entering and damaging it more.

The find is one of many examples in Mexico of important pre-Hispanic sites that have become Catholic places of worship. After the Spanish conquest, conquistadors and envoys of the church superimposed their beliefs on indigenous life.

Churches were built atop ancient shrines and pyramids in sites around Mexico, including Chalma and Cholula near Mexico City. The Mexican capital's massive cathedral was built from stone from pyramids flattened by the Spaniards.

03

## CHILDREN OF ONE CREATOR

### Alejandro Cirilo Perez Oxlaj\*

Don Alejandro Cirilo Perez Oxlaj was born in 1929 in the highlands of Guatemala; his Maya name, Wakatel Utiw, means "Wandering Wolf." A spiritual guide, medicine man, and expert in the reading of ancient glyphs, Don Alejandro is the head of the National Maya Counsel of Elders of Guatemala, a body formed by 440 Maya elders of wisdom, who represent 23 Maya ethnic groups. He has lectured widely on the Maya tradition and is currently involved in the recovery of Maya sacred sites. This speech is a living testimony to the impact of Christianity on Mayan culture.\*

Honorable Elders, Elders from different nations, with different languages, with different religions, my humble respect to you. In the name of the Heart of the Heavens, in the name of the Heart of the Earth, in the name of the Heart of the Water, in the name of the Heart of the Air, I bring to you greetings in the name of the Maya Counsel of Elders who live in lands of Central America.

With all respect I tell you this: we the Maya do not belong to any religion, what we live is a tradition. It is a tradition because it has been transmitted; it comes from the constellation of stars. Our tradition was transmitted to us and we continue transmitting it to our children. It is an oral education, transmitted from mouth to ear and it is very alive among us, it has been here for thousands and thousands of years. For instance, we do not speak in terms of the year 2000;

<sup>\*</sup>It was given extempore at the World Congress for the Preservation of Religious Diversity in New Delhi (November 2001). (Eds.)

instead, we say we are in the year of 12 Baktun and 13 Ahau; we are in the Fourth Period of the Sun.

... We have one only Creator. He created us all with different languages, in different sizes, with different colors of skin; with different dances, with different music, with different songs, and with different way of doing ceremonies, but always directed to one and only, our Father, our Creator. This is why we the Maya speak with this invocation:

"Oh! Eternal Grandfather, you who live in Eternity, we don't see you where you are, Father, but in the silence we hear your voice, we feel your presence, you are with us. Bless us all who inhabit the face of the earth, who are under of the face of the heavens. We all are your children, we the human beings, our brothers the animals, the ancient trees, the nation of stone, our Mother Earth."

This is our invocation to the Father.

This day when we are here gathered together has been written in our Maya Prophecies, It is the Return of our Ancestors. The ancestor doesn't refer to a person, the ancestor is "The Word" that has been transmitted to us and continues to be passed on — all this great knowledge that belongs to our ancestors.... The Maya Prophesy says: May you all arise! May not one nor two groups be left behind! It doesn't say only the Mayas, it says for all to arise, no matter what color, race or creed. Honorable Elders, remember: there is only one Sun that shines upon all of us. There is the same Air that we all breathe and which nourishes our lives. One Water that we drink and which converts into blood in our veins. And we are on the same Earth; she is our Mother. In her we are born and on her we rest for a short time. We the Maya do not believe in hell. We die and we go to rest for a short time; then, we return. This is visible, we have been killed by the millions and here we are, we are the same ones. We have not lost our tradition because these words that I am telling you are written in

petroglyphs, on stones, on our steles, in caves. You will not find these in books. Our tradition is very much alive now and it will be alive in the next centuries.

Today we are in the Fourth Period of the Sun. We are almost at the end of it. Then we will arrive to the year '0'. When we speak of Year '0' we are speaking of the Maya Calendar of the Long Count, a calendar that has five thousand two hundred years. The year '0' will be between 2012 and 2013, we don't have the precise date because 500 years ago our grandfathers were killed, our great elders of wisdom were killed, our great teachers were assassinated. The religion that was imposed on us did cause us significant damage. Our great elders the astronomers were burned alive. They said we were diabolical and called us satanic, they didn't understand our language. Now you understand, there are thousands of languages in the world but only one Creator.



# A DRUM AND A DREAM: THE SUPPRESSION OF AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY DURING SLAVERY IN THE U.S.

#### **Dorothy Randall Gray\***

The American holocaust had its counterpart in Africa. Since antiquity, slavery had relied on a supply from Africa and parts of Asia; this went on during Islamic times. But with European colonization, a wholly different phenomenon took place, which fused racial prejudices with biblical sanction of slavery. As native populations in America declined steeply, the need for cheap labour fuelled a massive slave trade from Africa, beginning in 1502, with millions of Black Africans forcibly transported across the ocean. Crowded in the most squalid conditions and starved, so many died that sharks made it a habit to swim in the wake of slave ships. The slave trade was controlled mainly by the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British.

From its inception, the Atlantic trade slave had the support of the Church. Although there were a few dissenters, most theologians agreed that Blacks were "natural slaves." Some even argued that an African transported to America changed "from a barbaric servitude to a human servitude" and was therefore done a great favour. One theologian wrote as late as 1764, "The greatest misfortune we could bring to those poor Africans would be to put a halt

<sup>\*</sup>The author is an African-American speaker and writer, and a spiritual counsellor. This paper was presented at the World Congress for the Preservation of Religious Diversity in New Delhi (November 2001). (Eds.)

to this [slave] trade." The Vatican (Pope Gregory XVI) officially condemned the trade slave only in 1839.

Slavery was abolished England in 1833, in France in 1848 (after a first abolition in 1794 in the wake of the French Revolution, which was overturned in 1802), and in the U.S.A. only after the Civil War (1861-65); but in the U.S.A., an unjust and humiliating racial segregation persisted until 1964. Traditional Christian sanction of racial superiority was also behind the justification for South Africa's apartheid. In February 2006, the Anglican Church apologized for its role in the trade slave, though ruling out any financial compensation.

Honoured and distinguished guests. I come to you this evening as a poet, writer and interfaith minister, but it is my poet heart that would like to speak first. I will begin with an excerpt from my poem, "Looking For Her Name."

... "What do I call myself?" It is written in the soil In the talk of the tree In the curve of the cloud In the rock walking beneath the sky What do I call myself? She repeated Casting dreadlocks into the sea Her hair grew to trees Drinking salt for their wounds Her trees grew to hands Reaching back for their bones In the midnight water of no names She gathered the bones in the curl of her hair Each one a life unspoken Grandmothers of grandmothers Called out of their names Before tongue could shape itself Before cornbread was cooked

And the peas were shelled She gathered the bones Dreams calcified on ocean's floor No grandmother guilt To piece lives together again Or warm secrets from the marrow Her hair glistened seaweed and sand Ancient tears and Olokun's silence Holding on like life itself She cried, "What do I call myself?" And the words turned whirlwind Stirring the sea Until waves moaned like tired feet Until waters ached but did not answer She shook her head Until ocean opened its legs And bones rattled thunder But not her name....

I come to you this evening as Dorothy Randall Gray, but in fact, I don't know my real family name, the name of my lineage. That name was stolen from me 400 years ago when my people were stolen out of Africa. They were sold into slavery in America, "the land of the free and the home of the brave." My name was taken from me when my ancestors were forbidden to utter its sound or pass it on to their children. A name tells where you belong and who came before you. It speaks of your character and your destiny. It carries the memory and the membranes of a culture. It is often the only thing that is left when all else has been destroyed. But when even the name is taken away, what do I call myself?

When Christopher Columbus invaded the shores of America in 1492, he planted the seeds of a disastrous era that would claim hundreds of millions of lives before it was over. Five hundred years later we can still taste the bitter fruits of his harvest. He brought with him diseases that would kill over 70% of the Native American people within three years.

Whole tribes disappeared from the face of the earth.

Columbus also brought sugar cane to the New World. Within a few years the monstrous demand for this crop would call for the blood, bones and sweat of millions of slaves to keep it fed. In order to supply cheap labor to tend these fields, slave traders came to our African villages, stole us from our homes, put us in shackles. They threw men, women and children into the bowels of foul smelling ships and packed us together like the fingers of a fist. We would lay there naked in that darkened hold for weeks at a time on the treacherous journey from Africa to America know as the Middle Passage. Many of us perished during that crossing. Those who died along the way were simply dumped overboard like garbage. It is estimated that over 75 million Africans lost their lives during the Middle Passage.\* We call it the African Holocaust.

In the name of their Christian god, the slave owners reasoned that Africans needed to be brought to America so they could be civilized. This thinking was so prevalent that it surfaced as recently as 1986 when a third grade New England student was taught that "Black people were slaves because they wanted to be. They were uncivilized and had no religion. They had to be slaves because they weren't Christian. They were punished by God, and that's why they had black skin so you would know they were bad."

African slaves were considered savages in need of conversion. We were considered property, not people, and as such we could be bought and sold as easily as you could purchase

<sup>\*</sup>This figure is too high; about three millions died during the Middle Passage, a horrific enough number as it is. However, many more — at least fifteen millions — perished in Africa, while being hunted or imprisoned in coastal "factories," waiting for slave ships to take them away. And another two millions possibly disappeared in "seasoning camps" upon arrival, especially in the Caribbean (in Jamaica, the British ran one of the most brutal of those camps). Altogether, the African holocaust made over twenty million victims over three and a half centuries, one of the worst genocides in human history. (Eds.)

a horse or a sow. In the face, we were often branded like cattle and chosen for our breeding capabilities. We were placed on auction blocks and sold to the highest bidder. Whole families were torn apart. Mothers and fathers, sons and daughters were sold off to different plantations, never to see each other again. The practice of slavery continued for 360 years and brought over 50 million slaves to the United States.\*

But the decimation of our lives and families were not enough for the slave owners. They wanted nothing less than the complete destruction of the African religion and culture of our ancestors. Thus, we were forbidden to speak our own language. Africans who came from the same tribes or regions were separated from each other. They were placed among other Africans who spoke entirely different tongues. And so, in order to communicate at all, we were forced to use English, the language of our oppressor.

Our sacred ceremonies were called "pagan rituals" and we were forbidden to practice them. We were not allowed to do our dances or sing the songs of our country. They took away our music and gave us their hymns. We were forbidden to play drums so they gave us bibles and the promise of a wonderful life in the next world. We were forbidden to honor our families. At any time of the day or night the slave master could come into our cabins, take away our mothers, daughters and sisters, and repeatedly force them into sexual acts. Men who fought to defend their families were considered troublemakers. They were beaten, sold away from their families, then shipped to another southern state, or to Jamaica or Barbados. The ones who perpetrated this travesty are also the ancestors of those Americans who self-righteously tout "family values."

We were forbidden to use our own names. Instead we had to take on the last names of the people who owned us. So

<sup>\*</sup>The actual figure is estimated by most scholars to be about 12 millions for the three Americas (North, South and Central). (Eds.)

when I say that I am Dorothy Randall Gray, what I am really saying is that my ancestors had a slave master named Randall and a slave master named Gray. So what do I call myself when I want the name my ancestors might have given me? Dara? Bolade? Adwoa?

I say I am a Black woman but there is no country called Black. If I want to return to my roots, what soil do I bend down and kiss? What customs and traditions can I pass on to my children? What national anthem do I sing and what foods can I claim as my own? Who am I without a flag, without a motherland or a mother tongue? My culture, my religion, my ancestors, traditions, customs, stolen, suppressed, violated, vilified, denied, destroyed — that is what I call terrorism.

Despite the horrors and cultural genocide of slavery, there were many runaways, slave revolts, acts of sabotage and subversion. Though our music was taken away, we still gave America its own unique music in the form of jazz, blues, and gospel. Though America was built on the backs of its African slaves, we have never received any kind of compensation or reparations for our invaluable contributions.

I know that the spirit of my ancestors still whispers inside me, and I know that they are with me. I stand here as the daughter of the strongest of the strong, a descendent of those who survived the Middle Passage, who made it through the storms of oppression and degradation, and still managed to shine. I know this, even though I do not know what to call myself. So for now, just call me friend.

80 03

## IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON ANCIENT TRADITIONS AND AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGION

#### Chief Nana Apeadu\*

The one aspect, which is common in all the indigenous religions in Sub-Sahara Africa, is that Africans have a religion and believe in Supreme God — the Creator, the all-Knowing, the Ever-present and all-Powerful. They acknowledge the Divine Presence in their daily lives. However each country may have different names and appellations for God.

The Akan name for God is *Onyame Onyankopon-Oboade* — the Creator Father-Mother God — *Onyame Obatanpa*. An Akan proverb is *Obi nkyere abofra nyame*, meaning "nobody teaches a child about God." It is the child's biological knowledge.

Africa has her own culture and beliefs, which are deeply depicted in its very strong extended family traditions. Culture is part of the African indigenous Religion. The African life is wrapped in religion. The whole community faithfully carries out all rites and rituals connected with rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage, death and life after death. The ceremonies bind and form religious values which govern the family and society.

In my paper I will discuss the impact of colonization and Christianity on the ancient traditions and the African

<sup>\*</sup>The author is a queen mother from Ghana; who has worked with the United Nations for over three decades. This article is based on excepts from her paper presented at "Sanskriti Sangam," the First International Conference & Gathering of Elders held in Mumbai in February 2003. (Eds.)

Indigenous religion, language, libation, and message of horns, drumming and music. The paper is also based on the Akan in Ghana, who make up about 65% of the people in Ghana. According to the early missionaries and anthropologists, Africans were without religion and did not know God, so their mission was to convert what they considered were "heathens" and turn them into Christians. The Africans had to be rescued and be put on to the Western culture. As a result of this the beautiful art forms were regarded as idols, some sacred shrines were demolished and the beautiful art and crafts were burnt to ashes.

#### Conversion

The Ghanaian converted Christians were forbidden to attend any functions involving rituals because they were considered idols. Also Ghanaian names were considered pagan, so to be enrolled in school a child had to adopt a more religious name which had to be from the Bible.

African languages were considered inferior and banned from social events. The colonial languages became the status official languages. Educated Christians also had to wear Western clothing. In other words, the African was stripped of his/her identity, culture, and traditions. The degradation of the African affected our ancient tradition.

Many years after Africans gained their independence, Africans have an inferiority complex about our language. A few East African countries have developed Swahili as the lingua franca; however, the rest of the African countries believe that the language of their former colonial masters — the English, Portuguese, and French — are the only civilized languages; there, the vernacular language is hardly spoken. One would think that they have no language. In Ghana, there are about forty-six different languages but few of them are officially learned at school. No matter how well children do in school, if their English is not good they are considered uneducated.

#### Inferiority Complex

There are many reasons why people refuse to teach their children their native language. They think that the native tongue might confuse them, although children learn languages easily. The real motive behind that excuse is the inferiority complex, the colonial mentality. Everything African is inferior and everything western is good. The question to them is, "What can our native language do to get us international jobs?" They fail to realize that many people speak the native tongue and English. . . .

As elders we have to help the African youth to be proud of whom they are and should portray their culture and traditions everywhere they go, especially to the outside world. People still look down on Africa and the perception should be changed.

There are many countries in Africa and yet at the U.N. there is not one African (sub-Saharan) official language. At this time the official language in Ghana is English.

The Apeadu Peace Center in Aburi, Ghana may be an answer to the urgent cry for the revival of the ancient traditions. The center is a home for youth around the world, which come from diverse traditions to share their visions of peace. As the world's youth learn to respect and honor differences, we will become bonded in a common culture of peace, which commits us all to love humanity. Let us invest in the Youth our future, the next generation. . . .

क्ष ७४

### FROM THE HOLY CROSS TO THE HOLOCAUST

#### Kalavai Venkat\*

This paper throws light on an important chapter of Christianity which few are aware of today, even in the West, despite numerous studies: how Christianity nurtured the anti-Semitism that was to become an article of faith of the Nazis, and how various Christian churches approved of the Nazi campaign against the Jews, at times actively taking part in it.

For reasons of space, we had to omit much of the first part of Kalavai Venkat's paper; it provided a historical background to anti-Semitism, tracing its roots to the New Testament which called the Jews "Christ-killers," "children of the Devil," "brood of vipers," etc. The author, for instance, quoted at length Norman Beck, a distinguished academic and Lutheran theologian, who demonstrated that the New Testament contains over 450 anti-Semitic remarks. 1 That, in effect, makes this "holy" scripture the first anti-Semitic text in the world, and a model and inspiration for subsequent ones.

Indeed, the fathers of the Church soon launched on a systematic demonization of the Jews; a single and typical example will suffice, drawn from the fourth-century Eight Orations against the Jews by "Saint" John Chrysostom (the archbishop of Constantinople whom we already met in "Early Christian Destruction of Pagan Cultures"): "The Jews, like a fattened animal, are stubborn; they have been

<sup>\*</sup>The author is, in his own words, an India-born, Silicon Valley-based orthodox, practising, agnostic Hindu. He has authored many articles and papers dealing with Indian history and current issues. (Eds.)

reduced to a state of utter depravity by gluttony and drunkenness.... The Jews are cannibals, and eat their own children.... A Jew is the Devil himself. Bring the Jews and slay them before me. The Jews are Christ-killers. God has abandoned them; show them no mercy" — and so forth. Persecutions and forced conversions to Christianity followed and came to be regarded as natural in Christendom.

CB

All the killers were Christians. The Nazi system was the consequence of a movement of ideas and followed a strict logic; it did not arise in a void but had its roots deep in a tradition that prophesied it, prepared for it, and brought it to maturity. That tradition was inseparable from the past of Christian, civilized Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Elie Wiesel, 1986 Nobel Peace Prize winner, on the Holocaust

#### 1. The road to earthly hell

... With the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity, the Church acquired unprecedented powers. In a milieu where the image of the Jews as evil had been reinforced, Christianity would use the state apparatus to marginalize the Jews.

Clerics and theologians often called for killing of the Jews even in the fourth century CE. It was inevitable that Constantine, who had converted to Christianity, would enact laws discriminating against the Jews, as Christians were a powerful group by then. Initially, he banned the Jews from taking Christians as slaves but allowed the other way round. Next, he prohibited the circumcision of slaves.<sup>3</sup>

The ban on slave ownership ensured that the Jews would not be able to engage in agriculture, which was at that time dependent on slave labor. This resulted in the elimination of the Jews as landowners. The demand for prohibiting the Jews from owning slaves, while allowing Christians to own them must have been a calculated ploy as evident from the fact that bishops keenly enforced this law even after the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup>

Constantine also punished proselytization to Judaism with capital punishment.<sup>5</sup> A law decreed in 383 CE allowed a lawsuit to be brought against a proselytizer or proselyte even after his death and allowed confiscation of his property.<sup>6</sup> This made conversion to Christianity a one-way traffic and would have resulted in a decline in the Jewish population.

Theodosius I decreed that it was adultery deserving capital punishment for a Christian to marry a Jew. The Church, after the promulgation of the acts of the Council of Elvira (~ 300 CE), excommunicated any Christian that cohabited with a Jew. The Jews were outlawed from holding any civil or military office because they were declared "the enemies of Heavenly Majesty." This would be the precursor to Hitler's reduction of the Jews as people without rights. Hitler correctly told the Christian bishops who met him in the aftermath of the 1933 laws that he was merely putting into effect what Christianity preached and practised for 2,000 years. 10...

As if these humiliations were not enough, Christians often subjected the Jews to pogroms. In the middle of the fourth century, Bishop Innocentius destroyed synagogues and erected churches in their places. He then offered the Jews the option of forced baptism or expulsion. Around 413, a band of forty Christian monks led by one Barsauma, swept through Palestine, destroying synagogues and temples. Only after butchering the Jews that were weeping at the Wailing Wall did this marauding pack of devout Christians rest. 11 ... In 414, in Alexandria, after Christians committed a genocide of the Jews, Bishop Cyril expelled whoever was left. In 418, Severus

forcibly baptized all Jews of Minorca. In the fifth century, Christian mobs repeatedly slaughtered the Jews. In 423, Simon Stylites, whom Christians hail as saint, disallowed Theodosius II from restoring synagogues that Christians had destroyed.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in 534, Justinian prohibited reading of the scrolls of the Law in Hebrew and the use of rabbinic commentary. He ordered the Jews to use the vernacular instead. As a result, the reading of the Old Testament was subject to the Christian exegesis, and the synagogue to unwelcome Christian proselytism. <sup>13</sup> In 598, Pope Gregory I decreed that the Jews must live with reduced privileges befitting those that rejected the Church. <sup>14</sup> The words of Daniel Goldhagen aptly describe the plight of the Jews under Christian hegemony and intolerance:

The road to earthly hell [for the Jews] has been paved by a claimed [Christian] monopoly on the road to heaven.<sup>15</sup>

#### 2. "A Jew returns to his faith like a dog to his vomit"

The Jews were repeatedly humiliated, persecuted and terrorized during the journey on the road to earthly hell even after the fall of the Roman Empire. This is why any attempt to shift the blame on the Roman Empire for the persecution of the Jews must be treated as dishonest. The Church continued to determine the fate of the Jews even after the fall of the Empire as it had done before.

#### 2.1 Enemies of the Fatherland

Between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Crusades there were numerous bloody conflicts between the Muslims and Christians. Sadly, during every Islamic onslaught, Christians branded the Jews traitors and persecuted them. The Seventh Council of Toledo proclaimed in 694:

The impious Jews dwelling within the frontiers of our Kingdom have entered into a plot with those other Hebrews [i.e., Muslims] in regions beyond the seas, in order that they might act as one against the Christian race. ... The Jews, through their crimes, would not only throw the Church into confusion, but, indeed by their attempted tyranny, have essayed to bring ruin to the Fatherland and to all the population.<sup>16</sup>

Note the chilling parallel between the seventh-century Christian labeling of the Jews as the "enemies of the Fatherland" and a similar characterization by the Nazis in the twentieth century. Likewise, the Church portrayed the Jews as traitors during the Islamic invasion of Gaul in 732. When the Moors conquered Barcelona in 852, the Anales Bertinianos reported:

Jews having played the traitor, the Moors capture Barcelona and, nearly all the Christians having been killed, and the city devastated, they retire unpunished.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the Jew was made the scapegoat every time Christians failed militarily. When Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade in 1095, Christians first massacred Jews in Rhineland and France before setting forth to launch an attack on Muslims. Christians accused the Jews of collaborating with the Caliph Hakim the Admirable against the Christians in his realm, and of instigating the Caliph to destroy the Holy Sepulcher. Predictably, there was a large-scale butchering of Jews. Many of them preferred suicide to death at the hands of the enemy. Some Latin chroniclers, reporting this carnage, advocated keeping alive some Jews because "they bore the providential testimony to the blood of Christ." 18

In 1096, at the height of the persecution, Peter the Venerable called for a genocide of the Jews, whom he blamed for Christ-killing:

#### A "just and splendid" slaughter

The First Crusade captured Jerusalem in July 1099, with Raymond de Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse, at the head of main army. His chaplain, Raymond d'Aguiliers, recorded the slaughter of Jerusalem's Muslim and Jewish population in vivid terms:

Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the Temple of Solomon, a place where religious ceremonies were ordinarily chanted. What happened there? If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle-reins. Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgment of God that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies. The city was filled with corpses and blood.

Edward Peters, The First Crusade: The chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and other source materials, p. 214 What does it profit to track down and to persecute enemies of the Christian hope outside, indeed far beyond, the frontiers, if the evil, blaspheming Jews, far worse than the Saracens, not at a distance, but in our midst, so freely and audaciously blaspheme, trample underfoot, deface with impunity Christ and all Christian mysteries?<sup>19</sup>

In those periods of unmitigated misery for the Jews, an occasional pope such as Alexander II did call for the cessation of terror against the Jews. But, even he did so only after attributing the plight of the Jews to the guilt they inherited from their forefathers.<sup>20</sup> As a result, while the Jews could expect some respite during his reign, it did nothing to change the fundamental charge that the Jews are Christ-killers and eternally guilty. . . .

#### 2.2 "We are sad that the Lord's enemies own land!"

Pope Stephen IV (768-772) instigated Christians against the Jewish ownership of land in the Frankish kingdoms, where they still enjoyed some rights. He writes:

We are touched by sorrow, anxious even unto death, since we have known that the Jewish people, ever rebellious against God and derogatory of our rites, within the frontiers and territories of Christians, thanks to some rules or other of the Kings of Franks, own hereditary estates in the villages and suburbs, as if they were Christian residents. The [Jews] are the Lord's enemies.<sup>21</sup>

Pope Eugene III, a disciple of Peter the Venerable, decreed in 1153 that anyone willing to take the Cross would be granted exemption from their obligation to pay usury on loans even though they were bound by contract to do so. Since Jews were the moneylenders, they were economically ruined.<sup>22</sup>

Archbishop Henry instigated Christians to usurp the property of a Jewish convert to Christianity, Peter. Having

tried all means to regain his property, Peter petitioned Pope Gregory I to intervene. The Pope commanded that Peter's property be restored and added:

Lest the convert return, owing to poverty, like a dog to his vomit.<sup>23</sup>

#### 2.3 Carnage of the Jews in the wake of the Crusade

In the wake of the Crusade, Christians made the Jews their first victims. Contemporary Christian accounts report:

Although they ought to have traveled the road undertaken for Christ, remembering divine commands and maintaining the discipline of the Gospel, they turned to madness, and shamefully and wantonly cut down with cruelty the Jewish people in the cities and towns through which their passage lay. . . . Throughout the cities through which they were passing, they [Christians] wiped out [the Jews] completely, as enemies internal to the Church, the execrable Jewish remnants, or forced them to the refuge of baptism — but many of those later reverted, like dogs to their vomit.<sup>24</sup>

Elieser bar Nathan, a Jewish chronicler of the 1096 massacre of the Jews during the Crusade reports the Christian war cry that accompanied the carnage in Speyer, Worms, Mayence and Cologne:

Here are Jews, dwelling in our midst, men whose fathers killed Him, all guiltless, and crucified Him. Let us first take our revenge on them, and extirpate them from among the nations, so that the name of Israel will no longer be mentioned; else they must become the same as we are, and profess our faith.<sup>25</sup>

This carnage of defenseless Jews was a recurring theme during the Crusades. On the Sabbath, Christians butchered saintly persons among the Jews. Neither the children nor the old were spared. The only way the Jews could save themselves was by converting to Christianity. Many Jews preferred suicide to conversion. Christian chroniclers reported these abject suicides in the following words:

At Worms too, the Jews, flying from the persecuting Christians, hastened to the Bishop. Since he promised them rescue only on the condition that they be baptized, they begged a truce for consultation. They entered into the Bishop's chamber at the same hour, and while our people waited outside for what answer they were going to make, they, persuaded by the devil and their own callousness, killed themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Inflicting such conditions on the Jews as to leave them with no option other than conversion, was a practice the Christians frequently followed. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) urged Alphonso VI, the king of Spain, to exclude the Jews from all civil and military offices, just as early Christian fathers had urged the Roman emperors. He declared that even a knave Christian priest is better than a Jewish priest:

Your [Christian] priests, however they may act, are still far better than the Jewish priests to whom Jesus had sent the cleansed lepers [Luke 17:14].<sup>27</sup>

#### 3. Beginnings of racial anti-Semitism

If the Church anti-Semitism was motivated by the desire to keep the Jews damned, and in a state of misery, but alive till the end of time, Christian mobs often did not comprehend such a nuance. Further, Church proclamations such as "one who kills a Jew has all of his sins forgiven," their characterization of the Jews as "enemies of the Lord" and "Children of the Devil," and legislations against the usury ensured that Christian mobs would set upon the Jews not only with vengeance but also to reap economic rewards. Each major wave of

repression corresponded to the expropriation of a major area of the economy pioneered by the Jews.<sup>28</sup> ...

In 1205, starting with the *Epistle of Innocent*, anti-Judaic law was systematically canonized in Germany. The Jews were deprived of their citizenship and classed as "serfs of the royal chamber." Even though this resulted in the segregation of the Jews on religious grounds, it would soon give birth to racial segregation. The canonical legislation of the thirteenth century brought back the laws of Constantine. The Church revived the portrayal of Christians as "children of the freed woman [Sarah]" while the Jews were "children of the slave woman [Hagar]" in its imagery.<sup>29</sup>

Any social contact, living together, eating together, sexual relations, personal conversation especially on religious matters, was to be prohibited as otherwise such a contact would "contaminate" Christian faith. The Jew was portrayed as a "contagious disease." The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) decreed that the Jew be ghettoized and forced to wear the Jewish dress, conical hat, and the "Jew badge": usually a yellow circle symbolic of the Jew as betrayer of Christ for "gold," an image that fused religious and economic anti-Semitism. By the time of the Council of Basel (1434), these laws were fully enforced, resulting in the segregation of the Jew not only on religious lines but also racial lines. The Talmud was declared illegal and it was burnt all over Europe.

As a result of this racially delineated anti-Semitism, the Jews were expelled from England in 1290, France in 1390 and Germany between the mid-fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries. In 1700, J. A. Eisenmanger, author of *Judaism Revealed*, depicted Judaism as a religion of bigotry and immorality, filled with hatred for Christians and giving license for any kind of immoral dealings with them. Such texts systematically demonized the Jews and remained in print until the beginning of the Nazi Era. Conservative Christians believed that the Jews could never overcome their "evil" traits because it was their unchangeable "nature."<sup>32</sup>

Raul Hilberg succinctly summarized this transition from religious to racial anti-Semitism:

The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The German Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. Martin Luther, the first Nazi

Richard Steigmann-Gall aptly summarized the widely held Nazi perception:

Luther was cast as a great national hero and religious reformer: as the first German, the first Protestant, and implicitly the first Nazi.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4.1 Sixteenth-century Christian attitude towards the Jews

Léon Poliakov, while discussing how anti-Semitism crystallized in its classical form in the fifteenth century, cites the words of Erasmus that best reflects the Christian standpoint:

If it is part of a good Christian to detest the Jews, then we are all good Christians. $^{35}$ 

The Jews, expelled from many European countries, had taken refuge in Eastern Europe. One branch of the Protestant rebellion, led by John Calvin of Geneva, was less anti-Semitic. This was primarily because Calvin identified his struggle with the biblical Jews and not with the contemporary Jews. Another reason was that in Geneva, when Calvin lived, most Jews had already been expelled, and there was little reason for Calvin to hate them. As a result, in those countries like Holland where Calvinism took roots, there was much less hatred towards the Jews than there was in Catholic and Lutheran influenced states. As we will see later, even during the Nazi Era the Jews would find refuge in those pockets of lesser anti-Semitism.

#### 4.2 "Call me a Jew"

In the 1520s, Luther was friendly towards the Jews as he attempted to convert them. His friendship was partly motivated by his struggle with the Catholic Church. He even wrote:

Our imbeciles, the papists and the bishops, the sophists and the monks, have treated the Jews... as if they were dogs and not men. They have done nothing but persecute them. ... Hence I beg my dear papists to call me a Jew, when they are tired of calling me a heretic.<sup>37</sup>

Luther attempted to convert the Jews. He was unsuccessful, as the Jews were unimpressed by his advocacies as they had been unimpressed by all Christian attempts starting with Jesus to proselytize them. In 1538, a Jewish rabbi wrote a book, *Against the Sabbatarians*, no longer extant, in which he apparently critiqued Lutheran theology. Going by Luther's irrational and hate-filled reaction, we can postulate that it must have been a brilliant text, whose arguments Luther could not assail. Luther responded by writing the most poisonous anti-Semitic text in 1540, *On the Jews and their lies*.

#### 4.3 The Nazi pogrom, a fulfillment of Martin Luther's program

In his book, Luther launched an *ad hominem* attack on the Jewish author, accusing him of perverting the scriptural passages.<sup>39</sup> He declared that he has abandoned all hopes he may have had to convert the Jews, and added:

They [the Jews] have failed to learn any lesson from the terrible distress that has been theirs for over fourteen hundred years in exile.<sup>40</sup>

Luther urged Christians to burn the Jewish synagogues and expel the Jews. 41 He held that Jewish misfortune is proof of Christian truth and Jewish error from Scripture:

Well, let the Jews regard our Lord Jesus as they will. We behold the fulfillment of the words spoken by Him in Luke 21:20: But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near for these are days of vengeance. For great distress shall be upon earth and wrath upon this people.<sup>42</sup>

He repeated the old Christian mischaracterization that the Jews are the "Devil's people"  $:^{43}$ 

Wherever they have their synagogues, nothing is found but a den of devils in which blasphemy, and defaming of God and men are practiced most maliciously. . . . They [the Jews] are real liars and bloodhounds. 44

Using the very phrases the Nazi did in the twentieth century, Luther, the first Nazi, called for the Jews to be slain, their synagogues to be razed and their houses to be set afire:

We are at fault in not slaying them [the Jews]. . . . Firstly, their synagogues should be set on fire. . . . Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. . . . Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer-books and Talmuds. . . . Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more . . . Fifthly, passport and travelling privileges should be absolutely forbidden to the Jews. . . . To sum up, dear princes and nobles who have Jews in your domains, if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden — the Jews. 45

Martin Luther also translated the Christian Bible into German for the first time, and made it accessible to all. 46 As a result, even lay Christians could justify their anti-Semitism with specific references to scripture. The German Lutheran

Church and its leaders such as Bishop Otto Dibelius, who later became the President of the World Council of Churches (1965) called the Nazi policies towards the Jews "a fulfillment of Luther's program." The Nazis on their part reprinted Luther's hate-filled anti-Semitic book. The editor of the 1936 Munich edition approvingly claimed that *On the Jews and their lies* was the "arsenal from which antisemitism had drawn its weapons." The theologians of the German Lutheran Church who met in Darmstadt in 1948, three years after the Holocaust, proclaimed that the Holocaust was a divine punishment and called upon the Jews to halt their rejection and ongoing crucifixion of Christ.<sup>47</sup>

Rubenstein and Roth write that there is no doubt how Luther would have interpreted the Holocaust: "He would have seen it as decisive proof of God's rejection of the Jews." 48

#### 5. The road to the Holocaust

Christian anti-Semitism remained intact even during and after the era of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Joseph Samuel Levi was a Jewish convert to Christianity. In 1795, he was not allowed to study in the German town of Rostock because no Jew was allowed to live there. He was baptized by a Lutheran minister in a neighboring town and rechristened Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey. Yet, the Danish Missionary Society barred him from entering the seminary on account of his having been a Jew. As a compromise, he was allowed to join African missions and finally to proselytize the Jews. He would emerge as the "Father of Modern Jewish Missions" after establishing the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews in 1809 CE. 49

Thus not even conversion to Christianity could "erase" the much-hated racial identity of a Jew. In that milieu, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, in one of his *Addresses to the German nation* delivered at the University of Berlin in 1807, accused the Jews of being in conflict with the "moral" German state. <sup>50</sup> Karl

Marx, in 1844, used violent language, and accused the Jews of initiating capitalism.<sup>51</sup>

#### 5.1 Strengthening the 'Christian-Germanic' spirit

#### S. M. Vernon writes:

Christendom has no greater shame, no deeper sin, nor a better proof of low spiritual life and poverty of thought, than its hatred of the Jews.<sup>52</sup>

Reverend Adolf Stoecker, a conservative Lutheran minister, was a Court and Cathedral preacher in Berlin. He vigorously campaigned for governing public life according to Christian ethics, and argued that Christianity belonged in the inner chambers of parliament just as much as it belonged in the believer's private life.<sup>53</sup> He repeated Marx's vituperative allegation and declared that the Jews were a "great danger to German national life." He blamed 'social abuses' on the Jewish capital, and asked for legislation to curb it. He called for a strengthening of the 'Christian-German' spirit:

Our whole future is threatened and the German spirit will become Judaized. ... These are our slogans: a return to German rule in law and business, a return to the Christian faith.<sup>54</sup>

Stoecker was no ordinary voice for he also ran the Christian Social Workers' Party which he had founded in 1878. In the fall of 1880, he garnered 250,000 signatures for an anti-Semitic petition and submitted it to Bismarck. He was elected to the Reichstag and influenced the Conservative Party's Tivoli Program of 1892 to "eliminate Jewish influence on German life and to have a Christian government." 55

#### 5.2 Jesus Christ was not a Jew; he was an "Aryan"

Stewart Chamberlain was a writer, a racist and a fundamentalist Christian. His book, Foundations of the Nineteenth

Century, was well received all over Europe. Hitler admired it. It soon became the Bible of racists and anti-Semites. Chamberlain was perturbed that his own religious beliefs must have had Jewish origins, and proposed that Jesus Christ was an Aryan, and not a Jew:

Whoever makes the assertion that Christ was a Jew is either ignorant or insincere: ignorant when he confuses religion and race, insincere when he knows the history of Galilee and partly conceals, partly distorts the very entangled facts in favour of his religious prejudices or, it may be, to curry favour with the Jews. The probability that Christ was no Jew, that He had not a drop of genuinely Jewish blood in his veins, is so great that it is almost equivalent to a certainty.<sup>56</sup>

Chamberlain also expressed his admiration of other infamous racists such as Martin Luther, and depicted them as role models for Germany.

#### 5.3 Jesus Christ, the first real Ku Klux Klansman

In the early decades of the twentieth century, anti-Semitism was as vibrant in the USA and in every Christian and Muslim state, as it was in Germany. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a Protestant Christian hate group, saw its membership surge from five thousand in 1920 to five million in 1925. A KKK pamphlet in 1925 announced that "Jesus Christ was the first real member of the KKK." Other pamphlets of this White supremacist group spoke of "Christ and other Klansmen" and blamed the Jews for killing Christ.<sup>57</sup>

This was not a rare exception. When Fritz Kuhn, a Nazi, addressed a mass meeting in New York's Madison Square Garden in 1939, nearly twenty thousand packed the auditorium to hear Kuhn scream, "Keep America clean from the Jewish menace!" 58

Over 120 American organizations, with strong Christian

leanings, campaigned for a boycott of anything Jewish between 1933 and 1940. Their anti-Semitic posters, which blanketed the USA, invoked the infamous "who's who" of anti-Semitic hatemongering in history, and read:

Jesus Christ, Martin Luther, Mohammad, Pope Clement VIII, Benjamin Franklin, Ulysses Grant, James Garfield and Henry Ford unite with 50 other famous personages in saying: JEWS ARE TRAITORS to America and should not be trusted. Buy GENTILE.<sup>59</sup>

Father Coughlin was an extreme-right, Christian fundamentalist priest and talk show host from the 1930s. He addressed fifteen million listeners each Sunday. He was the most popular talk show host of his time, which again demonstrates the fact that anti-Semitism was cherished by American Christians. He cited from the infamous forgery, the *Protocols*, and justified the racist, anti-Semitic laws of the Nazis as a "necessary political defense mechanism."

#### 5.4 True Christians hail Hitler

Oswald Smith was the most powerful Christian evangelist of the 1930s. He reported enthusiastically about Hitler after visiting Germany in 1936, and reported that he was writing about the "the New Germany, not the Germany I had seen in 1924 and 1929, but the Germany of Adolph Hitler." He approvingly reported:

What, you ask, is the real attitude of the German people toward Hitler? There is but one answer. They love him. ... Every true Christian is for Hitler. I know, for it was from the Christians I got most of my information.<sup>61</sup>

The Defender, the periodical in which Smith waxed eloquent about Hitler, had a circulation of 96,000 in 1936, indicating how well American Christians received such messages. Smith was also delighted that Hitler had banned the Jehovah's

Witnesses, and urged the USA and Canada to emulate his example. Smith continued in fulsome praise of Hitler's regime:

Before Hitler's days, Spiritism flourished. ... Now occultism of every description is banned. Hitler has enforced the laws of Saul. ... But the most favorable sign of all is the spiritual awakening that is coming to the German people. The Dom Cathedral in Berlin is full, with a minister who preaches the old-fashioned Gospel. He spares no one and none interferes with him. He deals openly with sin and salvation. ... Germany is safe. ... Let us pray for Germany. ... Germany is Protestant. It was from Germany that Luther came. 62

This report is a fair indication of how Christians everywhere perceived Hitler's persecution of the Jews as a very Christian act, and as a continuation of, rather as a return to, true Christian traditions. Billy Graham, America's leading Christian evangelist, was very much influenced by Smith.<sup>63</sup> As we will see later, Graham too, like his mentor, is an anti-Semite.

#### 5.5 The Pope proposes the 'Final Solution'

Cardinal Edward Cassidy, head of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, during his address of Jewish leaders in Washington in 1998, declared: "The ghetto, which came into being in 1555 with a papal bull, became in Nazi Germany the antechamber of the extermination."

Civilta cattolica had been founded by Pope Pius IX in 1850 to express papal views, and was edited by Jesuits directly appointed by the Pope. <sup>65</sup> Its contents were reviewed by the Pope himself before publication. This official Catholic Church organ repeatedly demonized and dehumanized the Jews, and paved the path for the Nazi extermination of the Jews. In 1893, in an article titled, "Jewish Morality," Civilta cattolica reports:

[The Jewish nation] does not work, but traffics in the property and the work of others; it does not produce, but lives and grows fat with the products of the arts and industry of the nations that give it refuge. It is the giant octopus that with its oversized tentacles envelops everything. It has its stomach in the banks ... and its suction cups everywhere: in contracts and monopolies. ... It reigns unopposed. 66

During the 1920s and 1930s, *Civilta cattolica* published anti-Semitic articles that hardly differed in tone from what the Nazis published at the same time. It declares: "The world is sick ... everywhere peoples are in the grip of inexplicable convulsions. Who is responsible? It is the synagogue. The Jews are uniquely endowed with the qualities of parasites and destroyers." 67

Shortly after this declaration, Himmler would declare the Jews to be lice and describe their extermination as "delousing." In 1864, Quanta Cura, the encyclical of Pope Pius IX, blamed the "ills" of modernism on the Jews, and depicted the Jewish place of worship as the "synagogue of Satan," and the "font of modern evil." In 1871, Pope Pius IX, whom Pope John Paul II beatified in 2000, declared that "by rejecting Christianity, Jews had become dogs and that there existed in Rome too many of those dogs, who are heard barking in the streets, and going around molesting people everywhere." Pope Pius IX was also a vicious persecutor of the Jews. He ran an inquisition to abduct a Jewish child, Edgardo Mortara, from his parents, and refused to return him. To

In 1904, Theodor Herzl, a great visionary and the founder of the political movement for Jewish national re-creation, appealed to the Church for support in his project to protect Jews. The Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val, rebuffed Herzl with the following words:

As long as the Jews deny the divinity of Christ, we certainly cannot make a declaration in their favor.

... In order for us to come out for the Jewish people in the way you desire, they would first have to be converted.

Since those days witnessed intense persecution of the Jews, Herzl met with Pope Pius X, who implicitly justified the terror and violence the Jews were being subject to: "The Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people. ... [Judaism] was superseded by the teachings of Christ, and we cannot concede it any further validity." At this stage, Herzl pleaded that "terror and persecution may not have been the right means for enlightening the Jews." Pope Pius X imperiously replied: "The Jews had time to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ without any pressure; but they have not done so to this day."

In 1920, Hitler made it clear that he preferred the elimination of the Jews:

We are animated with an inexorable resolve to seize the Evil [the Jews] by the roots and to exterminate it root and branch. To attain our aim, we should stop at nothing even if we must join forces with the devil.<sup>72</sup>

Indeed, he would join hands with the Devil when the Vatican signed the Concordat with him in 1933. Most importantly, the Vatican would provide Hitler with the inspiration for the "Final Solution." *Civilta cattolica*, the official organ of the Vatican, writing in 1937, after the Nuremberg race laws\* had been fully enforced, discussed undertaking the total expulsion of the Jews. It went one step further and discussed the extreme option of "destruction" of the Jews. Of course, after discussing the option of destruction, the Vatican rejects it as

<sup>\*</sup> A series of measures passed by the Nazis in 1935, which deprived Jews of German citizenship and banned marriages between them and "citizens of German blood"; Jews were also denied the right to vote and to hold a public office. Nuremberg is also famous as the venue of the trials of Nazis leaders in 1945-46. (Eds.)

undesirable. But, what kind of religious order would even contemplate the "Final Solution" of the Jews? The Nazis were quick to get the message, the superficial disclaimer notwithstanding. *Der Sturmer*, the Nazi newspaper, and *Il Regime fascista*, the Italian Fascist newspaper, applauded *Civilta cattolica* as the anti-Semitic model, and opined:

All countries, including Italy and Germany, still have much to learn from the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.<sup>73</sup>

The Nazis would indeed learn from the Church Fathers and propose the "Final Solution" to solve the "Jewish problem."

#### 5.6 Christian origins of the Nuremberg laws

The Society of Jesus, known as the Jesuits, issued its "pureblood" decree in 1593. All Christians who had been "tainted" by Jewish blood were excluded from the order. A few years later, the Jesuits 'moderated' their decree and admitted Christians that could prove non-Jewish ancestry for five generations, and in a subsequent modification (in 1923) for four generations.<sup>74</sup> As Hitler was preparing for the lethal Nuremberg race laws, Klerusblatt, the authoritative Catholic organ of the Bayarian Catholic Priests' Association, announced on September 12, 1934 that it would "help with pleasure in the task of providing documentary Aryan proof to non-Jews in accordance with the wish of the Fuhrer." Once Hitler passed the Nuremberg laws in 1936, Klerusblatt, on January 22, 1936 gave its stamp of approval to the race laws and welcomed them as "measures designed to preserve and refresh the German blood as well as to eliminate the Jews as the bearers of civic and political rights."75

In 1937, while giving his approval to the lethal Nuremberg race laws, the infamous Bishop Alois Hudal, a close confidant of Pope Pius XII, and the head of the German Church in Rome, lamented, "The walls of the Ghetto had been torn down in the nineteenth century by the liberal state first and not by the

Church."<sup>76</sup> He called for laws against the emancipation of the Jews.

It is evident that the Nazis drew inspiration from the Jesuits while they formulated the Nuremberg laws. Eugen Klee, the German representative at the Vatican, in a meeting with Bishop Giuseppe Pizzardo, Undersecretary of State, expressed the Nazi admiration of the Jesuit law excluding the Jewish blood:

These laws of one of the most important orders [Jesuits] of the Catholic Church, which had been upheld throughout centuries and which must have therefore well proven to be necessary, go still beyond the measures that were adopted in Germany.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, the Jesuit decree had gone far beyond the Nuremberg law. While the former required proof of non-Jewish blood for five (then four) generations, the latter required such proof only for two generations. To understand that the Nazi thought did not evolve in vacuum, it is important to note the parallels between the Nazi codifications of race laws and the Christian formulations with regard to racial purity in the 1930s. Leading Catholic theologians in the 1930s formulated a Nazified Catholic theology called Reichstheologie.78 Karl Adams, a leading Catholic theologian, portrayed Hitler as the "savior of the German people and the preserver of Germany's blood purity."79 In 1937, in an attempt to justify the draconian Nuremberg laws, the German Catholic Church's authoritative Handbook of contemporary religious questions approvingly quoted Hitler's declaration that the encounter with "Jewishinspired Communism" is one of "struggle between European kultur and Asian unkultur [non-culture]."80 German bishops, welcoming the Nuremberg laws, emphatically declared: "Christianity can only welcome a scientifically founded racial inquiry and racial fostering."81

In 1938, during the brutal German and Austrian onslaught on the Jews, L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican's newspaper, supplied a laundry-list of Jewish "crimes" and whipped up anti-Semitic frenzy, while rebuking the brutal assaults in a backhanded manner. On October 7, when Mussolini presented his *Declaration on Race, L'Osservatore Romano* printed the declaration in full and approvingly disseminated the message. <sup>82</sup> In January 1939, once again asserting its approval of Mussolini's racial segregation laws, the newspaper reported:

The Church has always regarded living side by side with Jews, as long as they remain Jews, as dangerous to the faith and tranquility of Christian people.<sup>83</sup>

Of course, thanks to the Nuremberg laws, which were a diluted version of the earlier Jesuit decree, Jews had to remain Jews always, and hence unfit to live in the midst of Christians. It is no wonder that Julius Streicher, the notorious Nazi propagandist, who stood trial at Nuremberg [after the defeat of the Nazis], declared that "if he were to stand trial so should Martin Luther, who in turn derived his anti-Semitism from the Catholic Church."<sup>84</sup>

#### 5.7 The Concordat and the Vatican-Nazi collaboration

In 1933, when Hitler and the Nazis were still struggling to attain credibility and absolute power, the Vatican signed the Concordat and collaborated with Hitler. Pope Pius XI and Cardinal Eugene Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) welcomed Hitler and the Nazis to power. Catholic bishops swore an oath of allegiance to the Nazi state. The Concordat effectively conceded the regime the right to pursue, without Church criticism or opposition, its political goals, which included its openly militarist, imperialist and racist program. Pacelli also signed the secret annex to the Concordat, which gave the Church's approval to German rearmament, still forbidden by the Versailles treaty.

Hitler recognized the crucial help the Vatican had delivered. He boasted of his affinity to the Church and declared that he would "drive the Jews out more and more." The Concordat resulted in the liquidation of the Catholic Center Party and

consolidated Hitler's seizure of power. Cardinal Michael Faulhaber, in a report on Pope's message to Bavarian bishops, observed: "The Holy Father says with special emphasis that until recently the voice of the Roman Pope remained the only one to point out the serious danger threatening Christian culture, which has been introduced into almost all nations. Thus public praise for Hitler."88

The importance of the Vatican signing the Concordat for Hitler is best expressed in the words of Cardinal Faulhaber:

At a time when the heads of the major nations in the world faced the new Germany with cool reserve and considerable suspicion, the Catholic Church, the greatest moral power on earth, through the Concordat expressed its confidence in the new German government. This was a deed of immeasurable significance for the reputation of the new government abroad.<sup>89</sup>

It is evident from the words of Archbishop Grober that the Vatican did not sign the Concordat out of ignorance or under pressure. Grober declared after the war that "the Catholic Church had deceived German Catholics and the rest of the world with the Concordat."<sup>90</sup> It was more than deception. It was a systematic and cold collaboration with a regime that the Church saw as a friend of Christianity.

#### 5.8 Hitler yields to the Church

Konrad Adenauer, the longtime revered Chancellor of Germany and leader of Christian Democratic Party was imprisoned by the Nazis. In a letter from 1946, he writes:

In my opinion German people as well as the bishops and clergy bear a great guilt for the events in the concentration camps. The German people, including a great part of the bishops and clergy, accepted the Nazi agitation. It allowed itself to be brought into

line [with Nazism] almost without resistance, indeed in part with enthusiasm. ... One knew that personal freedom and all principles of justice were trampled underfoot, that in concentration camps great atrocities were being perpetrated, and that the Gestapo and our SS and in part also our troops in Poland and Russia treated the civilian population with unexampled cruelty. The pogroms against the Jews in 1933 and 1938 took place in full public view. The murders of the hostages in France were officially announced by us. One cannot therefore truly assert that the public did not know that the Nazi government and army command constantly and as a matter of principle violated natural law, the Hague convention, and the most simple laws of humanity. I believe that much could have been prevented if all the bishops together on a certain day from their pulpits had publicly protested against all this. This did not occur and for this there is no excuse.91

Adenauer was right. There had been a few occasions when the Church indeed stood up to the Nazis and Hitler backed off. After all, Hitler was a democratically elected leader, and he feared public opinion. That is why he transported much of the Jewish residents to Eastern Europe for extermination instead of gassing them in the heart of Germany. He knew that such an action might be repulsive to his German voters.

In 1941, Hitler announced euthanasia program to kill the putatively mentally and physically infirm. Bishop Clement August von Galen publicly condemned it as mass murder: "If they [the Nazis] start killing the insane, it can well be extended to the old, the infirm, sick, seriously crippled soldiers. What do you do to a machine which no longer runs, to an old horse which is incurably lame, a cow which does not give milk? They now want to treat humans the same way." Cardinals Adolf Bertram and Faulhaber also protested euthanasia. Faulhaber declared: "I have deemed it my duty of conscience

to speak out in this ethico-legal, nonpolitical question, for as a Catholic bishop I may not remain silent when the preservation of the moral foundations of all public order is at stake."93

Both Hitler and Goebbels feared that they would lose German support in case they acted against the bishops that protested euthanasia. They simply backed off and called off euthanasia. The Church could have certainly protested the Nazi anti-Semitic policies and practices had it so desired. Hitler, who had not yet come up with his "Final Solution" would have backed off. Yet, the Church chose not to protest. Instead, it collaborated with the Nazis and expedited the "Final Solution." Cardinal Pacelli declared that "the Church would not interfere with the German [eliminationist] policies on Jews."95

#### 5.9 "The thousand year old Jewish scourge"

The guilt of the Church goes further. Both Protestant and Catholic clergy handed over genealogical records to the Nazi, even though they had the option to refuse. <sup>96</sup> The seriousness of this guilt becomes more apparent when we note that Waldemar Gurian, a prominent German Catholic in exile, had already warned the Churches that providing support to the Nuremberg laws would lead to the "complete physical destruction of the Jews." <sup>97</sup>

As the Nazis rounded up and persecuted the Jews in full public view, both the Protestant and Catholic Churches aided and abetted the attacks. On January 30, 1939 when Hitler announced that he would annihilate the Jews should a war be forced on Germany, Archbishop Grober, in a pastoral letter declared that "the Jews hated Jesus and so crucified him, and that their lethality endlessly continued to afflict the world. The Jews' murderous hatred has continued in later centuries." In December 1941, at the height of the Nazi pogroms against the Jews, Protestant Evangelical Church leaders of seven regions of Germany collectively issued an

official proclamation that "the Jews are incapable of being saved by baptism, owing to their racial constitution, they are responsible for the war, and are the born enemies of the world and Germany"; they urged the Nazis to "adopt the severest measures against the Jews and to banish them from German lands." <sup>99</sup>

The "Final Solution" was a gradual program that originated in the Nazi Party Program of 1920 that "No Jew may be a member of the Volk." This reached a crescendo after the Nuremberg laws were enacted. In 1937, Cardinal Pacelli ordered an encyclical that portrayed the Jews as "a people that was to crucify Jesus" and as "Jesus' torturers" to be read from every German pulpit on Palm Sunday. Even though the encyclical was a condemnation of the Nazi interference in Christian religious affairs, it whipped up anti-Semitism. 100 In 1932, Pope Pius XI informed Mussolini, "I saw that the [Bolshevik] Commissioners [in Warsaw] were all Jews."101 In a milieu where the Nazis and the Church were instigating hatred against Communism, any identification of the Jews as the architects of Communism would have disposed the society unfavorably towards them. As Hitler prepared for an invasion of Communist USSR<sup>102</sup> and the Catholic Church prayed for Nazi Germany's victory over the USSR, a papal branding of the Jews as Communists would have had the effect of portraying them as the fifth column.

Christian anti-Semitism had percolated to all levels of Christian Europe: in Veszperm, Hungary, the local fascist party, the Arrow Cross, issued a flier for a thanksgiving service at the Franciscan Church to celebrate the liberation from the "thousand-year old Jewish scourge that had befallen us." This was a phrase used all over Europe. In fact, barring the honorable exception of Bishop Preysing, during the 1930s, German clergy as a whole ordained Christians to support Hitler. 104

#### 5.10 The "Final Solution"

Adolf Eichmann quite likely coined this phrase. In its original sense, it meant the elimination or the marching of the Jews out of the German nation, as the Christian Church had urged Hitler to enforce. Quite likely, during the German invasion of the USSR, this assumed a different meaning, again as originally suggested by the Vatican: the extermination of the Jews. During his trial in Jerusalem in 1961, Eichmann deposed:

To be frank with you, had we killed all of them, the 10.3 million [European Jews], I would be happy and say, alright, we managed to destroy an enemy. ... I suggested these words ["Final Solution"]. At that time I meant by this the elimination of the Jews, their marching out of the German Nation. Later, these harmless words were used as a camouflage for the killing [of the Jews]. 105

As Zygmunt Bauman correctly pointed out, "Nazism," [and hence its culmination in the "Final Solution"] should not be viewed as the failure of civilization, but rather its product." My analysis so far makes it clear that the "Final Solution" was very much a product of a Christian civilization. Yet, many Christian propagandists have attempted to disentangle the Christian Church from this guilt, and to blame the Pagan culture. Were the Nazis influenced by Pagan culture?

#### 5.11 The Nazi religion

One of the most persistent allegations is that the Nazis were influenced by occultism despite the fact that Hitler himself banned occultism as soon as he came to power, as we saw earlier. Koenraad Elst correctly points out that Goodrick-Clarke, in his *The occult roots of Nazism, secret Aryan cults and their influence on Nazi ideology, the Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890-1935,* has debunked the wholly spurious "facts" concerning the powerful Thule Society, the Nazi links with the East, and Hitler's occult "initiation." The 2003

publication by Steigmann-Gall demolishes the myth of Nazi-Occult connection for good. I will summarize the main arguments here.

All the sections of the Nazi movement that tried to couch its ideology in religious terms had one thing in common: they all tried to move the spiritual center from Rome or Jerusalem to Germany. Hitler himself, at least until 1937, put a lot of effort into the *Deutsche Christen* and created a ministry to unify the fractured Protestant churches. Only after the Protestant churches squandered the opportunities, did Hitler abandon his hopes in them. Muller stated, referring to Hitler's 1933 Concordat with Rome, that he now wanted one with the Protestant Churches, as a bloc against Rome. Hitler had even declared: "Through me the Protestant Church could become the established church, as in England."

Hitler betrayed a persistent affection for Jesus Christ, in whose messages he saw a religious dimension to the Nazis' political anti-Semitism. <sup>112</sup> On July 22, 1933, after a performance of Wagner's Christian allegory *Parsifal* in Bayreuth, Hitler addressed the nation on radio:

Among the congregations of the Protestant confessions there has arisen in the German Christians a movement that is filled with the determination to do justice to the great tasks of the day and has aimed at a union of the Protestant state churches and confessions.<sup>113</sup>

Hitler elsewhere declared that "although he was born a Catholic, inwardly he stood closer to the Protestant Church." Hanns Kerrl, the Reich Church Minister, declared that "the Fuhrer wants to protect positive Christianity." Like many Nazis, Hitler believed that Jesus Christ was an "Aryan." He ridiculed and rejected Nietzsche and the Paganists with utter contempt: "They dredge up rubbish from German prehistory! Then they read Nietzsche with fifteenyear-old boys." 117 ...

In summary, Hitler was a democratically elected secularist. He had little interest in letting the Third Reich be shaped by any particular religious ideology. Like every democratic leader, he understood the value of taking established organizations along his way. He interfered or attempted to sabotage those organizations only when they threatened his existence. He collaborated with the Church partly out of practical considerations and partly out of his own admiration of the Church order. In his Mein Kampf, Hitler wrote that "his plan for a triumphant Nazism was modeled on the Catholic Church's traditional tenacious adherence to dogma, and its fanatical intolerance." He also observed admiringly that "in building its own altar, Christianity had not hesitated to destroy the altars of the heathen."118 Most importantly, Hitler shared the Christian anti-Semitism. Eichmann, the Nazi architect of the Holocaust whose escape to Argentina the Vatican arranged, was born a Protestant. But upon his arrival in Argentina, he registered himself as a Catholic in his passport, and explained:

I recall with deep gratitude the aid given to me by Catholic priests in my flight from Europe and decided to honor the Catholic faith by becoming an honorary member. 119

There is nothing to show that the Nazis were influenced by any Pagan belief in their policies toward the Jews. But I have demonstrated how extensively the Nazis derived their justification from the Christian tenets and collaborated with the Church. The Nazi propaganda machinery borrowed heavily from Christian beliefs to demonize and dehumanize the Jews.

The disingenuous Christian attempts at blaming imaginary neo-Paganism for the Holocaust fall flat when we consider that in 1939, 95 percent of Germans identified themselves as Christians. Catholics constituted 43 percent of German population. The powerful film, Shoah, directed by Claude Lanzmann, illustrates how the Nazis, and the rest of Christian

Europe, derived its anti-Semitic inspiration and justification of the Holocaust from the Christian Bible. 121

As the devout Catholic and ex-Catholic priest, James Carroll, pertinently observes:

The German people, whatever else they did, maintained their ostensible Christian identity — which is why the question about, at the very least, acquiescence in genocidal crimes is a question about the content of that identity. 122

## 6. Accomplices in the Holocaust

As Hitler deported the Jews to their death camps, churches of every stripe aided and abetted the Nazis. The support came in different forms: the Church sometimes whipped up anti-Semitism as the Jews were getting herded into cattle-cars; or priests and bishops who virtually ran the government in some European countries justified deportations and handed the Jews over to the Nazis; or they justified the Holocaust as divinely ordained, and in some cases they directly participated in the massacre of the Jews. After the WWII ended, many Nazis escaped with the assistance of the Church. I will discuss a few of those cases.

# 6.1 Aiding and abetting the Holocaust

The Protestant Church of the state of Schleswig-Holstein (in North Germany) announced that it would joyfully serve the Nazi regime in the pursuit of racial purity. The average churchgoer was as hostile to the Jews as its clergy. All the Jews in that state, including those converted to Christianity, were forced to wear a yellow star; parishioners refused to receive communion side by side with these racially 'contaminated' Christians who displayed the stigmatic badge. It culminated in the expulsion of 8,000 converted Jews from the church. 123

Two weeks after Hitler invaded Poland, the German bishops

issued a joint pastoral letter, and described it as a war for the conquest of Lebensraum:

In this decisive hour we encourage and admonish our Catholic soldiers, in obedience to the Fuhrer, to do their duty and to be ready to sacrifice their whole person. We appeal to the faithful to join in ardent prayers that God's providence may lead this war to blessed success and peace for the fatherland and people.<sup>124</sup>

As the German army invaded the USSR and started massacring the Jews, the Catholic clergy, in their field prayer services, described it as a holy task:

Let us all, under Hitler's leadership, see in the devotion of people and fatherland a holy task, so that through faith, obedience and fidelity we will obtain the eternal resting place in Your light and Your peace.<sup>125</sup>

In 1941, the Vatican extended its support to the Nazi collaborators, and the Nazi puppet regime of France, the Vichy government, which enacted numerous anti-Semitic laws, persecuted the Jews, and also geared up to deport them. The Vichy government asked the Vatican for its opinion on its anti-Semitic laws. Léon Bérard, the Vichy envoy to the Vatican, reported on the Holy See's reply:

I have never been told anything which — from the standpoint of the Holy See — implied criticism and disapproval of the legislative and administrative acts in question. [For the Church], it would be unreasonable, in a Christian state, to permit the Jews to exercise the functions of government and thus to submit the Catholics to their authority. Consequently it is legitimate to bar them from public functions. . . . I was told by an authorized spokesperson of the Vatican: we shall not in the least be reprimanded for this statute on the Jews. 126

On June 29, 1943, while the Germans were slaughtering Jews all over Europe, and as they were arranging the deportation of Italian Jews, Pope Pius XII issued his Mystici Corporis Christi, in which he obliquely referred to the Jews:

But on the gibbet of his death Jesus made void the Law with its decrees, fastened the handwriting of the Old Testament to the Cross, establishing the New Testament in His blood. ... On the Cross then the Old Law died, soon to be buried and to be a bearer of death. 127

Goldhagen and others have seen in this phrase "bearer of death" a clear allusion to the killing of Christ, and a subtle way to foment hatred against the Jews. We must remember that Christian criticism of the Old Testament is standard tactics to attack the Jews without naming them. And what happened on the ground?

Over one thousand Protestant and Catholic clergy served as German military chaplains. Hardly any of them condemned the mass murders of the Jews; many approved of them. One clergyman even enthusiastically reported the view among the SS:

The Jews are parasites. They have exploited the Volk. So they should not wonder that we are now taking revenge on them.128

Some other priests approved of the Holocaust in scriptural terms:

There is a curse on this people ever since the crucifixion of Jesus when they cried: let his blood be on our heads and the heads of our children. 129

Franz Justus Rarkowski, Catholic military bishop of the Wehrmacht, the Nazi armed forces, announced in his widely received Christmas message of 1940:

The German people know who lightheartedly unleashed the dogs of war. It is our opponents [the Jews] that believed in the power of their money bags and the repressive force of that shameful and un-Christian Treaty of Versailles. 130

How ironic that he should blame the Jews for the war after the Vatican had urged Catholics to join Hitler in a war for the expansion of Germany's *Lebensraum*! In any case, justifying the Holocaust in scriptural terms conferred on it, in the minds of the soldiers, a divine approval. Clergy group absolved the soldiers that massacred the defenseless Jews.<sup>131</sup>

Pius XII's overall record is one of consistent silence on the atrocities he knew were being inflicted on the Jews across Europe. The Vatican was time and again called upon to condemn Nazi persecutions, and time and again refused to do so. Shira Schoenberg, in a study of "Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust," lists a number of such cases, from which we may quote a few examples:

- In the spring of 1940, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Isaac Herzog, asked the papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Luigi Maglione to intercede to keep Jews in Spain from being deported to Germany. He later made a similar request for Jews in Lithuania. The papacy did nothing.
- Within the Pope's own church, Cardinal Theodor Innitzer
  of Vienna told Pius XII about Jewish deportations in
  1941. In 1942, the Slovakian chargé d'affaires, a position
  under the supervision of the Pope, reported to Rome
  that Slovakian Jews were being systematically deported
  and sent to death camps.
- In October 1941, the Assistant Chief of the U.S. delegation to the Vatican, Harold Tittman, asked the Pope to condemn the atrocities. The response came that the Holy See wanted to remain "neutral," and that condemning the atrocities would have a negative influence on Catholics in German-held lands.

- In late August 1942, after more than 200,000 Ukrainian Jews had been killed, Ukrainian Metropolitan Andrej Septyckyj wrote a long letter to the Pope, referring to the German government as a regime of terror and corruption, more diabolical than that of the Bolsheviks. The Pope replied by quoting verses from Psalms and advising Septyckyj to "bear adversity with serene patience."
- On September 18, 1942, Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, wrote, "The massacres of the Jews reach frightening proportions and forms." Yet, that same month when Myron Taylor, U.S. representative to the Vatican, warned the Pope that his silence was endangering his moral prestige, the Secretary of State responded on the Pope's behalf that it was impossible to verify rumors about crimes committed against the Jews. 132

When one considers the impact papal pronouncements had at the time, it is clear that the papacy could easily have mobilized public opinion against pogroms and concentration camps, rather than ask Jews to "bear adversity with serene patience." It is hardly surprising that the Vatican agreed to recognize Israel only in 1993, and formalized this decision the next year. 133

## 6.2 A requiem for Adolf Hitler

The anti-Semitic Father Andre Hlinka established the Slovak's People's Party in 1905. In 1939, Josef Tiso and Vojtech Tuka were the president and prime minister respectively. Many ministers were clergymen. In 1942, the Slovaks asked Germany to deport 20,000 Jews so they could use that as a pretext to start elimination. Even Adolf Eichmann was quite surprised by this Catholic ingenuity, and remarked that the "Slovakians offered their Jews to us like someone throwing away sour beer." 134

The priest-president, Fr. Tiso described the expulsion of the Jews as "a Christian act because Slovakia had to free itself of its pests," and repeated his predecessor Fr. Hlinka's doctrine that "a Jew remains a Jew even if he is baptized by a hundred Bishops." <sup>135</sup> In 1942, as the Jews were being deported to death camps, the Slovak bishops collectively issued a pastoral letter, which portrayed the Jews as Christ-killers, and read:

The greatest tragedy of the Jewish nation lies in the fact of not having recognized the Redeemer and of having prepared a terrible and ignominious death for Him on the cross. ... The influence of the Jews has been pernicious. ... Not only economically but also in the cultural and moral spheres, they have harmed our people. The Church cannot be opposed, therefore, if the state with legal regulations hinders the dangerous influence of the Jews. 136

Tuka claimed that the elimination of the Jews was "for the good of his people." <sup>137</sup> In 1941, when the Lithuanian Jewry was being slaughtered, the Jewish leaders begged the Church for help. The Church "forbade the priests to help the Jews in any way whatsoever." In many instances, the Lithuanian priests participated in the killing of the Jews. <sup>138</sup>

In Germany, Cardinal Adolf Bertram wrote to the Nazis about "the harmful Jewish influences upon German cultural and national interests." A leading Austrian bishop, Johannes Maria Gfollner, issued a widely circulated pastoral letter calling for "Aryan" action against the Jews. 139 In Hungary, as the Jews were being dispatched to their death camps, Cardinal Justinian Seredi issued the Shepherd's Epistle, which was read before every congregation:

We do not deny that a number of Jews exercised a wicked, destructive influence upon Hungarian economic, social, and moral life. It is also a fact that the others did nothing to protest against their coreligionists in this matter. We do not doubt that the

Jewish question must be solved in a legal and just manner. And so, we do not voice any opposition to the steps which have been taken against them until now in the economic field in the interests of the state. Similarly, we lodge no protest against the eradication of their undesirable influence. On the contrary, we would like to see it disappear.<sup>140</sup>

In Slovenia, Bishop Gregory Rozman not only supported the Nazis but also created the Slovenian Home Guard, which participated in mass murders. He wrote pastoral letters in 1943, urging his faithful to fight for Germany:

By this courageous fighting and industrious work for God, for the people and Fatherland will we, under the leadership of Germany, assure our existence and better future, in the fight against the Jewish conspiracy.<sup>141</sup>

In Ukraine, Archbishop Szepticky blessed the notorious SS Galicia,\* which would have killed 800,000 Jews by the beginning of 1943. When Hitler committed suicide, Cardinal Adolf Bertram ordered that in all churches of his archdiocese a special requiem, namely, "a solemn requiem mass be held in commemoration of the Fuhrer, where prayers to the Almighty that His son, Hitler, be admitted to paradise, be offered." 143

## 6.3 Sheltering the Nazi fugitives

If the Church collaborated with the Nazi during the Holocaust, then it helped the Nazi fugitives by hiding them and providing them safe passage to Argentina. These operations were carried out at the highest levels of the Vatican under the direction of the Pope. I will merely list a few cases here.

<sup>\*</sup>Galicia is a region of South-East Poland and North-West Ukraine. It was annexed by Austria in the eighteenth century, became part of Poland after World War I, and was divided between Poland and the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. During the War, the Nazis established an SS Galicia Division consisting mainly of Ukrainian soldiers, with the active support of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. (Eds.)

ODESSA and Die Spinne were amateur Nazi-smuggling organizations in comparison with the Vatican's Ratline set up by Father Krunoslav Draganovic, Secretary of the Croatian Institute of San Girolamo in Rome. His network was organized around the Brotherhood of San Girolamo, recognized as the Pope's official refugee assistance body. 144 Fr. Draganovic helped smuggle the worst Ustashi murderers\*. Pope Pius XII knew every detail of Fr. Draganovic's smuggling operations. It is also known that Cardinal Montini (later Pope Paul VI) and Fr. Draganovic discussed such operations and exchanged favors. 145 Ljubo Milos was one of the notorious criminals that the Ratline helped escape. Milos's notable act was the "ritual killing" of the Jews. After a transport arrived in the camp,\*\* Milos would put on a physician's gown, send the guard to bring him all those who had applied for hospital, take them to the "ambulance," put them along the wall and with a strike of the knife cut the victims' throats, shear their ribs and slit open their bellies.146

## 7. A charade of apologies

If the Vatican collaborated with the Nazis during WWII, it tried to whitewash its crimes after the war ended. Most tellingly, it not only evaded trial but also attempted to gain some respectability through a charade of "apologies."

#### 7.1 Holy lies

Before his election as Pope Paul VI, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, who had been involved with the notorious Ratline, asserted that had Pius XII "protested or condemned [the persecution of the Jews], it would have been harmful."

<sup>\*</sup>Ustashi were members of the Ustasha (or Ustasa), a Croatian fascist movement which, during World War II, exterminated Serb, Jewish, and Gypsy inhabitants with notorious brutality. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Milos was commandant at Jasenovac, Croatia's largest concentration and extermination camp, where an estimated 400,000 perished. (Eds.)

## Soon, a Fascist Saint

On October 3, 1998, Pope John Paul II travelled to Croatia to beatify Alojzije Stepinac, former Archbishop of Zagreb and Cardinal of Croatia. Beatification is the first step towards official sainthood, and John Paul II will be remembered for his rapid-fire, "fast-track" beatifications.

This case, however, provoked outrage. After World War II, Stepinac had been arrested and tried by Yugoslav authorities for complicity in genocide: in 1941, he had welcomed the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia and called Hitler "an envoy of God"; he supported the Nazi-backed Ustasha fascists, who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Jews, Orthodox-Christian Serbs, and Roma (Gypsies). An official report of the trial noted: "... Investigation by the Yugoslav War Crimes Commission established that Archbishop Stepinac had played a leading part in the conspiracy that led to the conquest and break-up of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It was furthermore established that Archbishop Stepinac played a role in governing the Nazi puppet Croatian state, that many members of his clergy participated actively in atrocities and mass murders, and, finally, that they collaborated with the enemy down to the last day of the Nazi rule. . . . " A convicted war criminal, Stepinac died under house arrest in 1960.

The U.S.-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, the well-known Jewish human rights organization dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust, appealed to the Pope to postpone the beatification, but the request was ignored.

The Roman Catholic Church's collection of "saints" makes for an interesting study.

The implication was that such a protest would have resulted in more deaths. <sup>147</sup> Earlier, we saw that the Church had indeed protested against euthanasia, and that Hitler had backed off. The Church had also successfully protested the Nazi attempts to remove the crucifix from the schools in 1936 and 1941, <sup>148</sup> as it had protested the Nazi tolerance of cremation. <sup>149</sup> Hitler capitulated.

Denmark was far less anti-Semitic than the rest of Europe. The Danish Lutheran Church protested Nazism and saved over ninety percent of its Jewry. Hitler did not harm the Danish Church. 150 On the other hand, after the Allies liberated Rome on June 4, 1944, the Germans were in the process of gradually deporting the Jews of Trieste, which they still occupied. The Pope and the Vatican were completely safe. More than half a year had passed since Bishop Santin's appeal; yet Pius XII still did absolutely nothing to help Trieste's Jews: fifteen of the twenty-two trains that brought 1,200 Jews mostly to Auschwitz departed Trieste when the Pope was safely under Allied protection. 151 In 1999, to quell the criticism about Pius XII, the Vatican formed a committee of Jewish and Christian historians to produce a report on his conduct during WWII. But, when the historians demanded access to archives, the Vatican refused to oblige. 152 After all these decades, we do not even know if all incriminating evidence has been destroyed or not.

#### 7.2 A hypocrite's 'apology'

In March 1998, after coming under tremendous pressure to apologize to the Jews for its anti-Semitism, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews issued the document, We remember: a reflection on the Shoah, in which it dishonestly claimed:

The Shoah was the work of a thoroughly modern neo-Pagan regime. Its anti-Semitism had its roots outside of Christianity. 153

I have already demonstrated that anti-Semitism is the very essence of literalist Christianity, and that the Holocaust was merely the culmination of two millennia of Christian hatemongering against the Jews. This dishonest document urged the Jews to stop being anti-Christian. Earlier, in 1982, the Vatican canonized Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, who had been the anti-Semitic editor of an anti-Semitic Catholic journal. The Vatican falsely presented him as a Holocaust martyr. 154

In May 2001, when Pope John Paul II visited Syria, he shared the stage with Bashar Assad, a dictator and a sponsor of terrorism. As John Paul II listened, Assad launched an anti-Semitic tirade and claimed that just as the Jews had plotted to kill Jesus, they had plotted to kill Mohammad as well. John Paul II did not protest the outrageous hate-mongering either on the stage or later. . . .

## 7.3 To forgive is evil

Should one forget the past, forgive and move on? Many people would answer this question in the affirmative. But do they realize what a dangerous proposition it is, especially when we deal with something as lethal, persistent and obnoxious as anti-Semitism? More pertinently, will anyone forgive the Nazis and let Nazism flourish? If not, why will someone advocate forgiving the Church and letting Christianity flourish with its anti-Semitic core intact? That is the point I will explore in this last section.

What is the first question a child would ask when she encounters a Cross or a Crucifix for the first time? She would ask, "Who killed Jesus Christ?" The Christian Bible has the answer, loud, clear and repeated many times over: the Jews. If the child were to grow up as a good Christian, believing the words of the Christian Bible to be true, then she has to believe that all past, present and future generations of Jews are guilty of deicide, because that is what her holy book would tell her. The child is by default prejudiced against the Jews. Merely blaming the Romans for the crucifixion of Jesus would

not suffice because the Christian Bible is emphatic that while the Roman official considered Jesus innocent, the Jews demanded his crucifixion. So any belief in the crucifixion of Jesus has an inseparable corollary that blames the Jews for deicide. If a Christian apologizes to the Jews for anti-Semitism and still holds the Christian Bible, the Cross and the Crucifix as holy, then he practises hypocrisy. Any atonement, for it to be genuine, must be accompanied by a rejection of the causal factor — in this case Christianity, responsible for the resultant effect — in this case the Holocaust.

In fact, rejecting literalist Christianity and its insignia is the only reasonable course of action for Christians today. It would be unreasonable to demand that they atone for the crimes of their ancestors, who persecuted the Jews and ultimately sent them to the gas chambers. A Jew who has not been persecuted cannot receive apologies on behalf of his ancestors. It would then mean that guilt can be inherited, a ridiculous and dangerous proposition not different from the Christian accusation that all generations of Jews are guilty of deicide. Guilt cannot be inherited.

By the same yardstick, a Jew today cannot forgive a Christian, dead or alive, for the sins the ancestors of the Christian committed against the ancestors of the Jew. I will illustrate this with an example from real life. Simon Wiesenthal and his wife were both Holocaust survivors. There is a poignant scene in the movie, *Murderers among us*, which was based on Wiesenthal's life. Mr. and Mrs. Wiesenthal have been freed from the concentration camp. She tells him, "Simon, I want to have babies and I want to forget everything." He replies, "I want to have babies but I do not want to forget anything." Wiesenthal believed that he had survived the camps for a purpose: to bring the Nazi fugitives to justice. He would bring well over a thousand of them to justice.

Once, while in the camp, Wiesenthal was taken to a dying SS soldier. The soldier had butchered a Jewish family, including an infant, in Dnepropetrovsk; overcome with remorse,

he wanted to atone. He wanted to seek forgiveness from a Jew. He asked Wiesenthal: "Will you forgive me? Without your answer, I cannot die in peace." Wiesenthal did not answer one way or the other and walked out of the room. He was not sure whether he had done the right thing. He penned his dilemma in a powerful book, *The Sunflower: on the possibilities and limits of forgiveness*. Many leading practitioners of ethics wrote their opinions on the question Wiesenthal posed.

Josek, an observant Jew, was quite forthright. He told Wiesenthal, in their concentration camp:

You have no right to forgive a murderer in the name of people who have not authorized you to do so. What people have done to you yourself, you can, if you like, forgive and forget. But it would have been a terrible sin to burden your conscience with other people's sufferings. I believe in Haolam Emes — in life after death, in another, better world, where we will all meet again after we are dead. How would it seem if you had forgiven the murderer? Would not the dead people from Dnepropetrovsk come to you and ask: "Who gave you the right to forgive our murderer?" 156

Bolek, a Catholic seminarian from Poland who had been incarcerated with Wiesenthal said: "You ought to have thought of something: here was a dying man and you failed to grant his last request." <sup>157</sup>

The Dalai Lama, speaking generally, said: "I believe one should forgive the person or persons who have committed atrocities against oneself and mankind." 158

I have a simple question to ask: how does a father, whose son is shot dead by the Nazis in front of his eyes, feel — as in the scene from *Murderers among us*? He feels an impotent rage, helplessness and utter failure to prevent the death of his infant son, who believed that his father would protect him. There was nothing he could do to save his child that

# Thoughts from Simon Wiesenthal

There is no denying that Hitler and Stalin are alive today ... they are waiting for us to forget, because this is what makes possible the resurrection of these two monsters.

The schools would fail through their silence, the Church through its forgiveness, and the home through the denial and silence of the parents. The new generation has to hear what the older generation refuses to tell it.

For your benefit, learn from our tragedy. It is not a written law that the next victims must be Jews. It can also be other people. We saw it begin in Germany with Jews, but people from more than twenty other nations were also murdered. When I started this work, I said to myself, "I will look for the murderers of all the victims, not only the Jewish victims. I will fight for justice."

Survival is a privilege which entails obligations. I am forever asking myself what I can do for those who have not survived. The answer I have found for myself (and which need not necessarily be the answer for every survivor) is: I want to be their mouthpiece, I want to keep their memory alive, to make sure the dead live on in that memory.

trusted him. He feels very small. It is very difficult to live with those memories. The grandiose notion of forgiving the enemy comes handy to assuage those feelings of remorse and makes one feel better or even noble. It is an exercise in deceit. How would such a father react, if he were to meet his son and his murderer together in *Haolam Emes* as Josek asked? Would the son feel betrayed by his father, who failed to protect him, forgave his murderer so as to look larger than life size in the eyes of the world?

No doubt the Dalai Lama is motivated by sublime thoughts. After all, it is such elevated thinking that makes this world a better place to live in. But what did his forgiveness of the Chinese mean to the millions of Tibetans who were raped, massacred and exiled? A Dalai Lama that forgave his tormentor lives in exile along with millions of Tibetans. The tormentors have gone scot-free. On the other hand, a Wiesenthal, who refused to either forget or forgive, brought over a thousand Nazi fugitives to trial. In his own way, he avenged the death of eighty-nine of his relatives who disappeared in concentration camps. When he meets those relatives in *Haolam Emes*, he could see them in their eyes and smile. He could put his hand on his heart and say that he did his best. Can those who forgive, especially the murderers of someone other than themselves, say that?

Bolek too, I believe, was genuinely motivated by his religious belief. But, what does it translate into in real life? The powerful oppressors expect the victim to forgive. If he refuses, they pronounce him guilty of being inhumane. As Eugene Fisher clearly stated:

It is the height of arrogance for Christians to ask Jews to forgive them. On what grounds? We can, as established by evidence of changed teachings and changed behavior, repent and work toward mutual reconciliation with Jews. But we have no right to put Jewish survivors in the impossible moral position of offering forgiveness.<sup>159</sup>

This exactly is my position too. Those who were responsible for the Holocaust have every obligation to atone. The Jews have no obligation to forgive them.

In the words of Baruch Spinoza, the famous Dutch-Jewishborn philosopher:

Of all hatred, none is more deep and tenacious than that which springs from extreme devoutness or piety. 160

Indeed. Christianity demanded extreme devoutness to an anti-Semitic doctrine from its followers. Those who followed it hated the Jews, not because the latter were evil, but because scripture said so. It was a divinely ordained hatred. Ironically, the Christian religion, instead of atoning for its sins, pontificates to the world on the virtue of forgiveness. Christian fathers who displayed extreme humility towards God arrogantly issued inhumane decrees against the Jews. Christian piety has been responsible for persistent anti-Semitism and its resultant Holocaust. Christianity, which advertises itself as the religion of love, spread the most everlasting hatred against the Jews. I will conclude, echoing the spirit of Spinoza:

There is none more arrogant than he who advertises his humility. There is nothing more hate-filled than that which calls itself the religion of love.

To forgive a grave sin is evil, for it lets the sinner go scot-free; you shall always avenge for a righteous cause; for the sake of your loved ones; if not anything else, it at least ensures justice over time; it keeps love and trust alive; even if you lose everything in this world, you could still hold your head high, smile at, and embrace your loved ones in Haolam Emes, for you fought for them — for a righteous cause.

#### References

- 1. Beck, Norman A.: "Removing anti-Jewish polemic from our Christian lectionaries, a proposal," http://jcrelations.net/en/?id=737.
- 2. Abrahamson, Irving, ed.: Against silence, the voice and vision of Elie Wiesel, Vol. 1, p. 33.
- 3. The Theodosian code 16:9:1-5. Also see, Pharr, Clyde: The Theodosian code and Novels and the Sirmondian constitutions, pp. 471-472.
- 4. Katz, Solomon: The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish kingdoms of Spain and Gaul, pp. 96-103.
- 5. The Theodosian code 16:8:7.
- 6. Ibid., 16:7:3.
- 7. Ibid., 3:7:2 and 9:7:5.
- 8. Ruether, Rosemary Radford: Faith and fratricide, the theological roots of anti-Semitism, p. 189.
- 9. Parkes, James: Anti-Semitism, pp. 87-103.
- 10. Schweitzer, Frederick M.: History of the Jews since the first century AD, p. 222.
- 11. Ruether, Rosemary Radford: Faith and fratricide, the theological roots of anti-Semitism, pp. 192-193.
- 12. Ruether, Rosemary Radford: Faith and fratricide, the theological roots of anti-Semitism, pp. 193-194. For the mass murder of the Jews in 414 CE, see Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 36.
- 13. Parkes, James W.: The Conflict of the church and the synagogue, a study in the origins of antisemitism, pp. 393-393.
- 14. Linder, Amnon: The Jews I the legal sources of the Middle Ages, pp. 417-443.
- 15. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 257.
- 16. Synan, Edward A.: The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages, p. 52.
- 17. Ibid., pp. 52-53.
- 18. Ibid., p. 67.
- 19. Ibid., p. 76.
- 20. Ibid., p. 69.
- 21. Ibid., p. 62.
- 22. Ibid., pp. 76-77.
- 23. Ibid., p. 80.
- 24. Ibid., p. 70.
- 25. Ibid., p. 71.
- 26. Ibid., p. 73.
- 27. Ibid., p. 65.28. Roscher, William and Grayzel, Solomon [tr.]: The status of the Jew in the

## Expressions of Christianity, with a focus on India

- Middle Ages from the standpoint of commercial policy in Historia Judaica 6, pp. 13-26.
- 29. See Seiferth, Wolfgang S.: Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages, two symbols in art and literature for a detailed discussion.
- 30. Ruether, Rosemary Radford: Faith and fratricide, the theological roots of anti-Semitism, p. 209.
- 31. Poliakov, Léon: The history of anti-Semitism, Vol. 1, p. 65.
- 32. Ruether, Rosemary Radford: Faith and fratricide, the theological roots of anti-Semitism, p. 220.
- 33. Hilberg, Raul: The destruction of the European Jews, Vol. 1, pp. 8-9.
- 34. Steigmann-Gall, Richard: The Holy Reich, Nazi conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945, p. 266.
- 35. Poliakov, Léon: The history of anti-Semitism, Vol. 1, p. 123.
- 36. Rubenstein, Richard L. and Roth, John K.: Approaches to Auschwitz, the Holocaust and its legacy, p. 52.
- 37. Poliakov, Léon: The history of anti-Semitism, Vol. 1, p. 222.
- 38. Rubenstein, Richard L. and Roth, John K.: Approaches to Auschwitz, the Holocaust and its legacy, p. 55.
- 39. On the Jews and their lies 47:137.
- 40. Ibid., 47:138.
- 41. Rubenstein, Richard L. and Roth, John K.: Approaches to Auschwitz, the Holocaust and its legacy, p. 53.
- 42. On the Jews and their lies, 47:139.
- 43. Ibid., 47:154.
- 44. Ibid., 47:156-157 and 47:172.
- 45. Martin Luther, Concerning the Jews and Their Lies, reprinted in Talmage, Disputation and Dialogue, pp. 34-36.
- 46. Rubenstein, Richard L. and Roth, John K.: Approaches to Auschwitz, the Holocaust and its legacy, p. 61.
- 47. Ibid., pp. 57-59.
- 48. Ibid., p. 56.
- 49. Meyer, Louis and Rausch, David A. [ed.]: Eminent Hebrew Christians of the nineteenth century, brief biographical sketches, pp. 113-119.
- 50. Rausch, David A.: A legacy of hatred, why Christians must not forget the Holocaust, p. 33.
- 51. On the Jewish question.
- 52. Vernon, S.M.: The hated Jew, in Our Hope 4, August 1897, p. 59. Cf. Rausch, David A.: A legacy of hatred, why Christians must not forget the Holocaust, p. 40.
- 53. Massing, Paul W.: Rehearsal for destruction, a study of political anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany, pp. 22-31.
- 54. Stoecker, Adolf: What we demand of modern Jewry in Massing, Paul W.: Rehearsal for destruction, a study of political anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany, pp. 278-287.

#### From the Holy Cross to the Holocaust

- 55. Dawidowicz, Lucy: A Holocaust reader, pp. 28-30.
- 56. Chamberlain, Houston Stewart and Lees, John [tr.]: Foundations of the nineteenth century, Vol. 1, pp. 211-212.
- 57. Rausch, David A.: A legacy of hatred, why Christians must not forget the Holocaust, p. 95.
- 58. Marcus, Sheldon: Father Coughlin, the tumultuous life of the priest of the Little Flower, pp. 149-150.
- 59. Szajkowski, Zosa: An illustrated sourcebook on the Holocaust, Vol. 1, pp. 12-13.
- 60. Marcus, Sheldon: Father Coughlin, the tumultuous life of the priest of the Little Flower, pp. 154-165, 208-218.
- 61. Smith, Oswald J.: "My visit to Germany," in The Defender 11, September 1936, p. 15. Cf. Rausch, David A.: A legacy of hatred, why Christians must not forget the Holocaust, pp. 100-101.
- 62. Ibid., p. 102.
- 63. Rausch, David A.: A legacy of hatred, why Christians must not forget the Holocaust, p. 100.
- 64. Carroll, James: Constantine's sword, the church and the Jews, a history,
- 65. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 83.
- 66. Kertzer, David I.: The Popes against the Jews, the Vatican's role in the rise of modern anti-Semitism, p. 145.
- 67. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 82.
- 68. Lifton, Robert Jay: The Nazi doctors, medical killing and the psychology of genocide, p. 477.
- 69. Kertzer, David I.: The Popes against the Jews, the Vatican's role in the rise of modern anti-Semitism, pp. 126-127.
- 70. Ibid., pp. 106-130.
- 71. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, pp. 238-239.
- 72. Ibid., p. 88.
- 73. Ibid., p. 83.
- 74. Lacouture, Jean: Jesuits, a multibiography, pp. 173-175.
- 75. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 60.
- 76. Lewy, Guenter: Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p. 281.
- 77. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 155.
- 78. Carroll, James: Constantine's sword, the church and the Jews, a history, pp. 517-520.
- 79. Lewy, Guenter: Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p. 279.
- 80. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church

## Expressions of Christianity, with a focus on India

- in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 142.
- 81. Ibid., p. 144.
- 82. Zuccotti, Susan: Under his very windows, the Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy, pp. 25 and 48-49.
- 83. Ibid., pp. 54-55.
- 84. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 163.
- 85. Ibid., p. 77.
- 86. Helmreich, Ernst Christian: The German Churches under Hitler, background, struggle, and epilogue, p. 249.
- 87. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 78.
- 88. Schloder, Klaus: The churches and the Third Reich, Vol. 1, pp. 242-243.
- 89. Lewy, Guenter: Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p. 90.
- 90. Ibid., p. 103.
- 91. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 227.
- 92. Helmreich, Ernst Christian: The German Churches under Hitler, background, struggle, and epilogue, p. 360.
- 93. Lewy, Guenter: Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, pp. 264-265.
- 94. Ibid., pp. 265-266.
- 95. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 78.
- 96. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
- 97. Lewy, Guenter: Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p. 281.
- 98. Ibid., p. 277.
- 99. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: Hitler's willing executioners, ordinary Germans and the Holocaust, p. 112.
- 100. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 47.
- 101. Kertzer, David I.: The Popes against the Jews, the Vatican's role in the rise of modern anti-Semitism, p. 263.
- 102. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 91.
- 103. Herczl, Moshe Y. and Lerner, Joel J. (tr.): Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry, pp. 214-215.
- 104. Lewy, Guenter: Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, pp. 226-232.
- 105. Bauer, Yehuda: A history of the Holocaust, p. 227.
- 106. Steigmann-Gall, Richard: The Holy Reich, Nazi conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945, p. 261.
- 107. Elst, Koenraad: The strange case of Savitri Devi:
- http://koenraadelst.voiceofdharma.com/articles/fascism/savitri.html 108. Steigmann-Gall, Richard: The Holy Reich, Nazi conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945, p. 262.

#### From the Holy Cross to the Holocaust

- 109. Ibid., p. 264.
- 110. Ibid., p. 158.
- 111. Ibid., p. 155.
- 112. Ibid., p. 265.
- 113. Ibid., p. 163.
- 114. Ibid., p. 168.
- 115. Ibid., p. 179.
- 116. Ibid., p. 86.
- 117. Ibid., p. 111.
- 118. Mayer, Arno J.: Why did the heavens not darken? The "Final Solution" in history, p. 98.
- 119. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 176.
- 120. Ibid., p. 70.
- 121. Also see, Lanzmann, Claude: An oral history of the Holocaust, pp. 99-100.
- 122. Carroll, James: Constantine's sword, the church and the Jews, a history, p. 29.
- 123. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 233.
- 124. Lewy, Guenter: Catholic Church and Nazi Germany, p. 226.
- 125. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 158.
- 126. Ibid., p. 149.
- 127.www.vatican.va/holy\_father/pius\_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf\_p-xii\_enc\_29061943\_mystici-corporis-christi\_en.html
- 128. Bergen, Doris L.: Between God and Hitler, German military chaplains and the crimes of the Third Reich, in Bartov, Omer and Mack Phyllis [eds.]: In God's name, genocide and religion in the twentieth century, pp. 128-132.
- 129. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 63.
- 130. Bergen, Doris L.: Between God and Hitler, German military chaplains and the crimes of the Third Reich, in Bartov, Omer and Mack Phyllis [eds.]: In God's name, genocide and religion in the twentieth century, p. 128.
- 131. Ibid., p. 134.
- 132. Schoenberg, Shira: "Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust": www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/pius.html
- 133. Merkley, P.C.: Christian attitudes towards the State of Israel, Mcgill-Queen's studies in the history of religion, p. 153.
- 134. Rotkirchen, Livia: The destruction of Slovak Jewry, a documentary history, pp. xx-xxi.
- 135. Rothkirchen, Livia: The Churches and the deportation and persecution of Jews in Slovakia, in Rittner, Carol Ann, Smith, Stephen D. and Steinfeldt, Irena [eds.]: Holocaust and the Christian world, reflections on the past, challenges for the future, p. 106.

## Expressions of Christianity, with a focus on India

- 136. Ibid., pp. 105-106.
- 137. Rotkirchen, Livia: The destruction of Slovak Jewry, a documentary history, p. 146.
- 138. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, pp. 67-68.
- 139. Ibid., p. 103.
- 140. Ibid., p. 106.
- 141. Aarons, Mark and Loftus, John: Unholy trinity, the Vatican, the Nazis and the Swiss banks, pp. 128-129.
- 142. Ibid., pp. 180-181.
- 143. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 200.
- 144. Aarons, Mark and Loftus, John: Unholy trinity, the Vatican, the Nazis and the Swiss banks, pp. 88-90.
- 145. lbid., pp. 113-115.
- 146. Ibid., p. 111.
- 147. Cardinal Montini, G.B.: *Pius XII and the Jews* in Bentley, Eric [ed.]: *The storm over "The Deputy,"* p. 68.
- 148. Kershaw, Ian: Popular opinion and political dissent in the Third Reich, Bavaria 1933-1945, pp. 205-208.
- 149. Heer, Friedrich: God's first love, Christians and Jews over two thousand years, p. 324.
- 150. Yahil, Leni: The rescue of Danish Jewry, test of a democracy, pp. 233-234.
- 151. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, p. 51-53.
- 152. Ibid., p. 197.
- 153.www.vatican.va/roman\_curia/pontifical\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\_pc\_chrstuni\_doc\_16031998\_shoah\_en.html
- 154. Goldhagen, Daniel J.: A moral reckoning, the role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its unfulfilled duty of repair, pp. 240-241.
- 155.www.adl.org/Israel/al-assad\_speech.asp
- 156. Wiesenthal, Simon: The Sunflower on the possibilities and limits of forgiveness, pp. 65-66.
- 157. Ibid., p. 83.
- 158. Ibid., p. 129.
- 159. Ibid., p. 132.
- 160. Poliakov, Léon: The history of anti-Semitism, foreword viii, citing *Tractatus* theologico-politicus, Ch. 17.

# Part 3

Expressions
of Christianity
in India
and elsewhere in Asia

The Christian campaign in Asia, as in America, was inseparable from the colonial onslaught. However, here it found its hopes of a rapid spread frustrated: the Asian religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism and others — had deeper roots than it had expected, and resisted through various means, from force in Japan and sometimes China to quiet rejection in India.

In this third part, we present a few of the lesser-known aspects of the history and growth of Christianity in India, and, with respect to the first article, in Asia. The second surveys Kerala's case; another deals with Sri Lanka's. A few articles paint a picture of the Goan Inquisition, one of the darkest chapters in the history of Christianity in India. While the Church's record in the West has been discussed and criticized since the nineteenth century, in India it remains a sort of crime to highlight how Indians - mostly Hindus, Jews, and Christian converts - were victimized, persecuted, occasionally tortured and burned to death by agents of a religion claiming to spread God's Love. Indeed, even today, most Christian scholars gloss over the Indian chapter of the Inquisition, generally stating that it issued rather benign judgments limited to Catholics who deviated from their faith. A recent and "authoritative" study, \* for example, gives no room to the history of the "Holy Office" in Europe, devotes just one paragraph out of 336 pages to the Goan Inquisition, and asserts that "it was not in its purview to judge or punish members of other communities, Hindu, Muslim or any other" — a clumsy misrepresentation contradicted by numerous pieces of evidence, some of which figure in the

<sup>\*</sup>Christianity in India: Two Thousand Years of Faith by Leonard Fernando & G. Gispert-Sauch (New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, 2004), p. 124.

following pages;\* it then selectively quotes a few sources to reach the minimal figures of 4,046 sentenced people, 57 of whom were "executed," and cheerfully ends its sanitized snippet with the sentence, "Burning alive was very rare."

This sort of obfuscation is sadly typical of Christian historiography; not only does it constitute an insult to the memory of the many thousands of innocent victims of inquisitorial cruelty, who have as much right to be remembered as have European or American victims, it is also unintelligent, as it assumes that people will not be able to find out the facts by themselves. Over 230 years ago already, Voltaire wrote: "Goa is sadly famous for its Inquisition, which is contrary to humanity as much as to commerce. The Portuguese monks deluded us into believing that the [Indian] populace was worshipping the Devil, while it is they who have served him."\*\* It is a sobering thought that what was frankly denounced in the eighteenth century should be depicted apologetically in the twenty-first.

On the other hand, a full and honest "confession" by today's Church representatives and Christian scholars of the terror the Goan Inquisition let loose on the local Indian population would have conveyed the wholesome message that they dissociate themselves from and condemn those horrific abuses of human dignity. Recording for posterity crimes committed against ethnic groups or cultures anywhere is part of the catharsis needed to build a humane future; denying them only prolongs their shadows.

#### CB

<sup>\*</sup> And many more in chapters 7 & 8 of A. K. Priolkar's well-researched and courageous study, The Goa Inquisition: Being a Quatercentenary Commemoration Study of the Inquisition in India (Bombay: 1961, republished New Delhi: Voice of India, 1991).

<sup>\*\*</sup> Voltaire, Fragments historiques sur l'Inde ("Historical Fragments on India," Geneva: 1773).

## CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN ASIA

#### K. M. Panikkar

"Sardar" K. M. Panikkar (1895-1963) was a historian, a journalist, a minister in India's princely states, a prolific author, an ambassador to China, Egypt and France, and finally the vice-chancellor of the University of Mysore. Among his many works, Asia and Western Dominance\* attracted the most attention, attempting for the first time a history of Europe's conquest of Asia from an Asian point of view — a perspective that turned out to be much less flattering to the West than that found in conventional histories. Wide-ranging, written in a fluid and detached style, the book included a chapter on the history of Christian missions in Asia, which roused the ire of missionaries, Jesuits in particular, and understandably so: Panikkar showed how, from Japan to India, Christian missions had ridden piggyback on imperialist powers, drawing unfair favours, indulging in tactics of division and secession, and therefore inviting a backlash once the "natives" had seen through their game. Even though Panikkar's scholarship was sound, no wholesome debate ensued: here as in Europe, the "soldiers of Christ" were — and are — incapable of facing and owning their history; they protested their innocence and blameless selflessness, and went on with their business.

We reproduce below most of the chapter of K. M. Panikkar's remarkable book (adding titles for subsections and a few details within square brackets, such as the modern spellings of some place names).

<sup>\*</sup> K. M. Panikkar, Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953, reprint Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 1993).

#### First efforts in India

... The next stage of Christian activity started with the arrival of the Portuguese in Asia. The Portuguese authority in the East was based on the Bulls of Calixtus III, Nicholas V and Alexander VI, dividing the newly "discovered" lands between Spain and Portugal and imposing on the monarchs of these countries the duty of propagating the Christian faith.

With the Portuguese, christianization was a state enterprise. The king paid for the entire ecclesiastical establishment in the East. The doctrine of Padroado (*jus patronatus* ["right of patronage," i.e. the duty of the king to protect missionary work] established by the Papal Bull of 1514) vested the authority for missionary work effectively in the hands of the Portuguese crown in areas where Portugal claimed political rights. The last vestige of Padroado, the claim of approving the appointment of Catholic bishops in certain parts of India, was given up by Portugal only in 1950. The Papacy took in hand the organization of the Holy Office to control missionary activities 123 years after Vasco da Gama's arrival in India.

In 1534 Goa was made a bishopric with authority extending over the entire Far East. Special instructions were issued to the Portuguese Viceroy to root out the infidels. Hindu temples in Goa were destroyed and their property distributed to religious orders (like the Franciscans) in 1540. The Inquisition was established in 1560 \*

In 1541, Francis Xavier, educated at Paris where he had come under the influence of Ignatius Loyola, set out for India to conquer the East for Christianity. Instead of going to the Archbishop's palace at Goa in a palanquin, he walked barefoot to a lepers' hospital and began at once washing their sores. In 1542 he established there the great college of St. Paul for the training of Asian missionaries. During the next hundred years entry of missionaries into the Far East was permitted

<sup>\*</sup> See the articles on the Goa Inquisition below in this Part 3. (Eds.)

only through Goa. Thus this institution played a most notable part in Christian activity in Asia. Most of the notable European workers in the mission field in the Far East underwent a preliminary training in Goa before they were assigned to their posts. Also, Japanese, Chinese, Annamites, etc., were brought to this college for training.

Dissatisfied with such organizing work Xavier left Goa to preach to the fisherfolk along the Malabar coast. There he met with some success through his earnestness and piety. But as his consuming desire was to spread far and wide the message of Christ, Xavier soon left India for the Far East, where we shall follow his activities later.

The Jesuit missions which he established in India took up with enthusiasm the work of conversion. But progress was slow till Roberto de Nobili came to be in charge of the mission in Madura [Madurai]. Father de Nobili, a man of remarkable insight, after a short experience of life in Madura, reached the conclusion that Christianity would have but little success in India if it kept to its western garb and refused to understand the mind and thought of the people of the country. In 1606 he obtained the approval of the Society of Jesus to undertake a serious study of Hinduism and Madura was a centre specially suited for this purpose. Closely following the social habits of Brahmans, Nobili was able to obtain assistance from learned pandits in his search for the principles of Hindu religious thought. After years of arduous work, in the course of which he acquired a fair mastery of Sanskrit, he met in argument the learned Brahmans of Madura, in a religious discussion. This was according to the ancient well-established practice of Sastrarthavada — debates on religious topics before a learned audience. There he tried to uphold Christian doctrines in terms of Upanishadic thought. He is said to have gained the respect of even the orthodox Brahmins of the court. But the other missions could not tolerate Nobili's attempts to present Christianity in a Hindu garb. He was recalled to Rome.

Intolerance of things Indian became henceforth the characteristic feature of missionary zeal in India. Any compromise with Hindu life or religion was avoided, e.g. the eating of beef was held to be necessary as it would put the convert altogether out of the pale of Hinduism.

The same spirit of intolerance was shown by the Jesuit fathers in the Moghul court. The Emperor Akbar took great interest in religious discussions and summoned to the court scholarly Jesuit missionaries from Goa. They were received with great courtesy, but the free discussions in the Ibadat Khana (House of Worship), where the debates on religion took place, displeased the Jesuit fathers greatly. Their intolerance of other religions and their arrogant attitude towards the exponents of other faiths were unwelcome also to the Emperor. So the missionaries had to leave the capital greatly disappointed.

In 1632 the Jesuits in Bengal were said to have forcibly converted two slave girls of the Empress Mumtaz Mahal. To punish them for this rash act Shah Jehan's armed forces drove out the Portuguese from their settlement. Thousands of them were slain or taken prisoner. No further attempt was made seriously to propagate Christianity within the Mogul Empire.

After the decay of Portuguese power by 1660, active interest in mission work declined even in South India. The establishment of the Inquisition in Goa (1561) and the *auto da fé* (first instance in 1563) revolted the conscience of both Hindus and Muslims alike

The Dutch and the British, who came after the Portuguese, were interested solely in trade. Moreover they were Protestants and had no sympathy with the activities of the Catholic orders. So the first phase of evangelization came to a close in India by the middle of the seventeenth century.

But we should remember some notable achievements to the credit of the Catholic missionaries during this period of Portuguese leadership. Father Estavo, an Englishman of the name of Hopkins, mastered the Indian languages and wrote

an epic poem in Marathi on the life of Christ. The first printing press in India was set up by Jesuit priests in Goa. At a missionary college near Cochin, Sanskrit and Tamil were taught. It is also claimed that a Spanish lay brother, Gonsalvez, cut the first Tamil type.

The Jesuits did not limit their interest to India. Francis Xavier, it will be remembered, was attracted by further horizons. From India, in 1545, he sailed to Malacca [in today's Malaysia]. Here he undertook the dual work, first of reforming the Portuguese, whom he found steeped in vice, and second of preaching to the infidels. But the Malaccans, as the saint's biographer admits, "remained indifferent to his message."

From Malacca Xavier sailed to Amboyna [Ambon, in Indonesia] where he settled down to work among the poor and lowly. He went among people stricken down by pestilence, nursed and looked after them. By his charity and piety this true soldier of God achieved a great measure of success.

While he was in Malacca, on his way back, he came across a Japanese named Anjiro, who was a fugitive from the justice of his own country. Anjiro gave him glowing accounts of the readiness of the people of Japan to receive the message of Christ. Anjiro went with Xavier to Goa, where he was entered at St. Paul's for theological studies. In 1549 Xavier set sail for Japan accompanied by this disciple and reached the fief of the Satsuma Daimyo who received him with courtesy. Here he had some success as he had the gift of languages and had in a short time picked up elementary Japanese. But dissatisfied with the slow progress he was making and chafing under the opposition of the Buddhist priesthood, Xavier set out for the capital, Miyako, to try to crown his missionary efforts by converting the Emperor himself. But disappointment awaited him. He returned to Goa in 1551. The opposition of the Buddhist monks had dashed his hopes and, ignorant as he was of the Eastern religions, to him the Buddha was a demon under whose evil influence the Japanese people were living in monstrous sin. Thus his work, based as it was on ignorance and

prejudice, produced negligible results. But he did not give up hopes. He wrote to Ignatius Loyola to send more workers for Japan.

While in Japan, Xavier had heard of the greatness of China. Here, he thought was a new field for his activity. He set out for China. But waiting for a ship on a little island off the Kwantung coast the indomitable old man died (1552).

Xavier is one of the heroic figures of Christian activity in the East. He towers above all who followed him by his sympathy for the poor and the lowly, by his energy and spirit, by his utter fearlessness in the face of dangers and his supreme faith in his mission. His dogmatism and intolerance were the outcome of his blind faith; but these qualities, which roused so much animosity against him that he was inclined to see the devil everywhere, went with a true humility of spirit and a genuine sense of charity. The spirit of St. Francis Xavier has been an inspiration for generations of Christian workers in the East.

#### The first breach in China

Meanwhile the Portuguese establishment in Macao had become an important centre of trade. There in 1565 the Jesuits built a residence. With the arrival at this place of two Jesuit missionaries, Valignano and Ruggieri, begins the second stage in the attempts to evangelize Asia. Up to this time the attempt of the Portuguese, secular and missionary, was to carry the heathen fort by assault. The state enterprise in christianization, which the Portuguese attempted at Goa, Cochin and other fortified centres, was one of conversion by force. Even at Goa, with the Inquisition in force for a long time, the majority of the population however continued to be non-Christian. Clearly the strategy of direct assault had to be given up. Valignano and Ruggieri now attempted to evolve a new line.

The new policy was for the missionaries to conciliate the

high officials and to render special service to them which would make the Christian propagandists valuable to those in authority. In order to do so, it was necessary to study the language, manners and customs of the country and conform to the life and etiquette of the circles in which they aspired to move.

In 1582 Ricci, an Italian Jesuit and an eminent mathematician, joined Valignano at Macao. Convinced as he was that influence throughout China could only radiate from Peking, he reached the Chinese capital in 1595. Unsuccessful at first he slowly won his way to favour at the court by making presents of chiming clocks and other scientific toys and by his skill in mathematics. He lived in the capital for ten years, kowtowing to the great, expounding cautiously the doctrines of his religion, and preparing the way for intensive activity at a later time.

Early in his Chinese studies Ricci had detected the conflict between Buddhism and Confucianism. Realizing that the greatest obstacle to Christianity was Buddhism, he sided with the Confucians and attacked the Buddhists. He quoted from the Confucian texts in support of the Christian doctrines and tried to show that Confucian doctrines did not conflict with Christianity.

Ricci died in 1610 in full confidence that he was leaving his colleagues "facing an open door." Nineteen years after Ricci's death the need for reforming the Chinese calendar brought another Jesuit mathematician Adam Schall into prominence at the Imperial Court of the Mings (1629).

The work with which Schall was entrusted had more to do with astrology than with astronomy. The official calendar was to contain auspicious dates for every important event. The Jesuit mathematician did not hesitate on one occasion to interpret the sun spots as representing the hostile influence of the Buddhist priests near the Ming Emperor.

A succession of Jesuit astronomers were appointed to the "astronomical" bureau for a period of a hundred years. But



Two natty Jesuits at China's imperial court: Matteo Ricci (left) and Adam Schall

there is little substance in the claims put forward by some historians that the Jesuits enjoyed immense prestige in the Ming court in Peking during this period. They could assure, however, the security of their co-workers in the districts. But the Ming dynasty itself was in serious difficulties at this time and the reigning Emperor turned to his Jesuit "astronomers" and asked them to manufacture cannon for him. The learned father did not hesitate to accept the task and the cannon he cast were named after Christian saints. But in spite of the artillery manufactured by the priests the Ming dynasty fell to the onslaught of the Manchus. Schall however managed

to retain his post in the new regime. The Manchu monarch was naturally suspicious of the Chinese, over whom the Manchu rule had not yet become firmly established, and therefore readily continued the patronage of the foreign scholar. Schall was nominated Vice-President of the office of Imperial Sacrifice, the Superintendent of the Imperial Stud and High Honourable Bearer of the Imperial Banquet — strange posts for a Christian priest to hold!

On the accession of the minor Emperor Kang Hsi, destined to be the greatest of the Manchu monarchs, Schall was appointed one of the tutors of the youthful sovereign. But this did not save him from the hostility of the critics of Christianity at the court and for some time the learned Father had to languish in prison. He died soon after his release (1666) and his mantle fell on the Belgian Verbiest, also an able astronomer and scientist.

Though the mission was closed in Peking, Verbiest and his assistants were permitted to carry on their scientific work. The young Emperor was interested in scientific subjects and the Jesuit scholar was again appointed to the posts held by his predecessor Schall.

An edict of Kang Hsi (1671) permitted the missionaries to propagate their religion though they were warned not to teach anything contrary to the welfare of the State. This was a period of high hopes. A new rebellion had broken out and cannon had to be made again. For several years Verbiest's main activity was the making of cannon. But while the priest flourished in the sunshine of imperial smiles, the church gained little.

Before his death (1688) Verbiest had been appealing to France to enter the mission field in China. Louis XIV, in the might of his newly acquired power and the fervour of his Catholicism, was not in a mood to take into consideration the rights of Padroado by which the Portuguese claimed the sole right of evangelization in the East. He had already established in Paris (1664) the Congrégation des Missions Étrangères

["congregation of foreign missions"]. This remarkable institution was not an "order" like the Jesuits but a "congregation" — i.e. a body of priests united by a common purpose and not by common vows on discipline. Its purpose, approved by the Holy See, was that of evangelization. In 1685 six French priests left for the Far East.

Among them was Gerbillon, a brilliant linguist, who rendered valuable service to the Chinese Government during the Sino-Russian border disputes which led to the Treaty of Nertchinsk (1689). As a reward for his ability and tact an "Edict of Toleration" was issued by the Emperor (1692) which declared that the doctrines, taught by the Europeans in charge of Astronomy and the Tribunal of Mathematics, "are not evil" and permitted people "to go to the churches freely to worship God."

The Jesuits brought in medicine also as a new instrument for securing further favour. After a cure was effected in the case of the Emperor himself, the fathers were permitted to stay within the Forbidden City (the Palace enclosure) and to build a church near the palace itself (1703).

But the outwardly imposing edifice of Jesuit success, built upon dubious practices such as participation in astrology and the acceptance of office in the Board of Rites, began to crumble at the very moment of its greatest triumph. The head of the Jesuit mission as the Honourable Bearer of Dishes at the Imperial Banquet, or as the President of the Board of Rites, was not likely to find favour either in Rome or in Paris, and this was the problem that was raised at the Vatican itself, by the Dominicans.

The real issue, which was raised by them, related to the "rites" question, i.e. how far it was possible to tolerate outward conformity with national (Chinese) practices without compromising the teachings of the Church. As formulated, it also involved such questions as to whether ancestor worship, according to Confucian practices, involved idolatry or was only respect shown to ancestors, and whether it was

legitimate to establish affinities between ancient Chinese religion and Christianity in order to convey the impression that there was nothing unnational in the new creed.

In 1693 the Papacy was forced to act. The Vicar-General, sent by the Pope to China, issued a mandate condemning the practices which the Jesuits had so far favoured. The Jesuits now took a step which they hoped would settle the controversy in their favour. They appealed to the Emperor for an interpretation of the Chinese rites. The petition submitted to the Emperor was in the form of what lawyers call a leading question in order to secure from the Imperial court a clear affirmative answer. European scholars, the petition stated, were urgently begging the Jesuit Fathers in China for correct information as regards ceremonies performed in honour of Confucius, sacrifices offered to Heaven and the special rites performed for the ancestors. The Jesuits in China, according to the petition, had given as their opinion that Confucius was honoured in China as a legislator, that the rites for the ancestors were performed to commemorate the love in which they were held by their descendants, and that the sacrifices to Heaven (Tien) were addressed not to the visible Heavens above us but to the Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth. In the end the petitioner (the Peking Jesuits) awaited His Majesty's elucidation with respect and submission.

The Emperor's reply was that "there was not a word that required changing," so perfect was the Jesuits' understanding of the religious conceptions of the Chinese. But the Pope naturally resented this appeal of the Jesuits to an authority outside the church in order to force his own hand. He sent a Legate to inquire into the whole question. This ecclesiastical ambassador was well received by the Emperor, but as he had to challenge the Emperor's right to decide the issue he was politely ordered to go back. On his way from Canton the Legate issued an authoritative declaration prohibiting the practices for which the Jesuits had fought so long. This declaration was represented to the Emperor as a defiance of his

own views and so the Legate was arrested and handed over to the Portuguese who kept him in jail where he died (1710). The Emperor ordered that only those foreigners who accepted the rites could stay in China and that the others should depart immediately. On the other hand a Papal Bull compelled every missionary going to China to take an oath fully accepting the apostolic command regarding the rites of China.

In 1724 the preaching of the Christian religion was officially suppressed and the foreign missionaries, excepting those employed at the court, were deported to Canton.

Thus came to an end the grandiose schemes of the Jesuits in China. One point should be mentioned here on the question of conformity of Christian missionary activity with prevalent rites in a non-Christian country. The Jesuit approach to the problem of rites in China, involving as it did some of the more important aspects of Christian dogma, in search for approximation with what was fondly believed to be the original religion of China, should not be confused with the attempt of Roberto de Nobili to interpret Christianity to the Indians. Nobili no doubt advised outward conformity with Hindu practices, but on issues of dogma he was firm. He argued with Brahman scholars with all the trained ability of a Christian priest who had also mastered Hindu metaphysics, which was very different from the Ricci trick of pretending to support Confucianism against Buddhism, hoping thereby to gain favour with those in authority.

### Turning to Japan

In Japan the history of Christian missions had been stormier and more heroic. After the return of Francis Xavier from Japan to India mission work continued to a limited extent mainly in the western part of the Island Empire. The feudal rulers of that part of Japan were anxious at that time to attract Portuguese vessels to their harbours mainly with the object of strengthening themselves against other feudal lords. They

realised instinctively the close connection between the foreign powers across the seas and the missionaries who had come to preach the new religion.

But work in the provinces did not satisfy the ambition of the missionaries. Their eyes were set on the capital Miyako, from which Xavier had returned so disappointed. Nobunaga was then well set on his career of conquest in which he had been opposed by the powerful Buddhist monasteries. The Jesuits thus saw a chance of interesting him in their mission to the disadvantage of the Buddhist church. Nobunaga encouraged them and in 1568 he invited the Catholic missionaries to Kyoto and even gave them land on which to build a church. Under his powerful protection the missions made unexpected progress.

But unfortunately for the Jesuits Nobunaga died soon and was succeeded by the famous Hideyoshi. In the beginning he also showed favour towards the Christians, and on one occasion in his palace he is reported to have discussed with the missionaries the possibility of arranging for a large number of ships to carry his army to the mainland. The hopes of the Jesuits ran high.

But their hopes were soon dashed. In 1587, instead of the expected favours they received news of an edict condemning the missionaries and their activities and ordering their

immediate departure from Japan.

Hideyoshi himself has given a convincing justification for his edict. He has stated simply that missionaries were foreigners and were preaching against the gods of Japan. Also he was fully aware of the disloyal tendencies of the nobles of the western region who, through the missionaries, were in contact with foreign Powers. In fact, the missionaries had got mixed up in political issues, and their hope had been to use the feeling against the Buddhist church in their favour. But this interference of the foreigners in the internal politics of the country recoiled on them when Hideyoshi realized the dangers involved in their activities.

The local Christian community continued to exist as a minor and obscure sect subject to intermittent persecution mainly because of its affiliations with foreigners. However in 1614 Iyeasu, the Tokugawa Shogun, made it clear that Christian teachings were no longer to be tolerated and an edict banning the religion was issued that year. A serious effort was made to root out the local Christian elements. The attitude of the Government seems to have led the Christians to intrigue with the Spaniards in the Philippines who were then talking glibly of invading Japan. A minor revolt attempted by the Japanese Christians in 1638 was put down with great severity and with this the attempted conversion of Japan came to a close.

In Japan an effort had been made to get the teachings of Christianity to the masses. While the missionaries in China had too much sense to interfere in political matters, in Japan the politics of feudal autonomy proved too tempting for the Christian Fathers and led to their undoing.

### The rise of Protestant missions

The decline of Portuguese power in Asia naturally affected Catholic missionary activity which under the *jus patronatus* was identified with the Portuguese crown. Even in the minor Portuguese possessions in India, where the church maintained an enormous organization, evangelization did not make much progress as the civil authorities had realized that undue interference with Hinduism was against their political interests.

From 1660 political activity on the coastal tracts of India was mainly in Protestant hands. By the end of the eighteenth century a spirit of evangelization permeated Protestant churches. In 1792 the English Baptists organized the first Protestant mission. The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799 in the evangelical interests of the Anglican Church; other sects followed in their wake. All this was unwelcome to the East India Company, and the Baptist Mission under William Carey therefore settled in Serampur, a tiny Danish settlement

near Calcutta. Carey was assisted by some notable men Eke Marshman who later laid the foundations of Protestant missions to China. A violent propaganda campaign was launched by Carey and his associates against Hinduism in Bengal which seemed to them to be in a state of dissolution. But Hindu orthodoxy reacted vigorously and Lord Minto felt obliged to prohibit such propaganda in Calcutta. Minto's letter to the Court of Directors is worth quoting: "Pray read the miserable stuff addressed specially to the Gentoos (Hindus) in which ... the pages are filled with hell fire, and hell fire and with still hotter fire, denounced against a whole race of men for believing in the religion which they were taught by their fathers and mothers...."

The fact that the power of the Company rested on the Sepoy army and that anything which touched the religion of the sepoys was likely to undermine their loyalty, as shown in the Vellore Mutiny, was also in the mind of Lord Minto. This predominant consideration weighed on the minds of the British in India, and the East India Company could not therefore give any direct support to Christian propaganda.

Many of the chaplains attached to the administration were, however, ardent advocates of an aggressive policy in regard to conversion and the appointment of an archbishop in India was advocated as "it would do good among the Hindus." The British Government was persuaded to extend the organization of its episcopacy to India, with a Metropolitan in Calcutta and numerous bishops with territorial titles, but its effect on the Hindu mind was altogether negligible.

### Progress in the nineteenth century

With the abolition of the Company's monopoly in 1813, the authorities had no longer a legal right to stop the activities of Europeans who were not in the service of the Company. Alexander Duff with his Scottish Mission College was able to convert a number of young Hindus of good family. As a

reaction, however, Hinduism started on its career of reform in Bengal and missionary success was halted. Only in the south in the state of Travancore did the work of conversion show any conspicuous results. Here, the Chanar community, suffering from social oppression, became the object of missionary activity and the attempt of the Maharaja to prevent social commotions led to question being raised in Parliament and the ruler being threatened with deposition. This action opened the eyes of other Indian ruling princes and there were a number of important states where no missionary activity of any kind, including schools, was permitted up to 1947.

Indirectly, however, the British Government of India gave the missionaries considerable help. Legislation protected the rights of converts to their share in Hindu joint families, and High Court decisions enabled converts to blackmail their wives to follow them into the fold of their new religion. The Government also encouraged the missionaries to work among the backward tribes.

Rather similar proselytization was taking place in China. After the exclusion decree of 1723 for nearly a century such Christian activity as existed was secret and not particularly important.

But conditions changed rapidly when the pressure of European nations forced China to open her ports first to the British (1842) and then to other nations. At the ports which were opened for trade missionaries were free to reside under the cover of extraterritoriality. The French Government, stepping into the shoes of the Portuguese, claimed to be the champions of Catholicism. The French envoy obtained an imperial decree permitting Chinese to practise Catholicism. Thus the wall was breached, and vigorous and well-concerted missionary activities began under the effective political patronage of different European nations.

The French joined the second China War on the pretext — which was to become a classic excuse in China to cover political aggression — that the execution of a missionary demanded

punishment. In the treaties that were concluded with the Powers in 1858, the missionaries obtained the privilege of travelling freely all over China, together with a guarantee of toleration of Christianity and protection to Chinese Christians in the profession of their faith. Thus was Christianity not only identified with Europe, but reduced to the position of a diplomatic interest of Western Powers in their aggression against China. The missionaries were clothed with extra-territoriality and given the right to appeal to their consuls and ministers in the "religious" interests of Chinese Christians. No greater disservice, as history was to show, could have been rendered by its proclaimed champions to the cause of the Church of Christ.

It is also significant that out of the unconscionable indemnities exacted from China after the various wars, the churches received a considerable portion. The missions thus started by benefiting from the humiliations of China and by being identified in the eyes of the Chinese with aggressions against their country.

Latourette tries to justify these efforts to introduce Christianity in the wake of foreign aggression on the ground that "it gave the converts a certain assurance of protection." But he admits that "it tended to make Christian communities imperia in imperio ["empires within the empire" or agents of the ruler], widely scattered enclaves under the defence of aliens.... Many Chinese, seeing the advantage to be obtained from powerful foreign backing, feigned conversion. More than an occasional missionary promised the Chinese the support of his Government to induce them to enter the Church."

The treaty clauses, in fact, wrote the ultimate doom of Christian activity in China. To have believed that a religion which grew up under the protection of foreign powers, especially under humiliating conditions following defeat, would be tolerated when the nation recovered its authority, showed extreme shortsightedness. The fact is that the missionaries, like other Europeans, felt convinced in the nineteenth century

that their political supremacy was permanent, and they never imagined that China would regain a position when the history of the past might be brought up against them and their converts. "The Church," as Latourette has pointed out, "had become a partner in Western imperialism." When that imperialism was finally destroyed, the Church could not escape the fate of its patron and ally.

Christianity in China was involved with the Taiping rebellion.\* At its start, this had a Christian background. But Hung Hsu-Chuan [Hung Hsiu-chuan], the leader of the revolt, soon became a prophet himself, and claimed to be the younger brother of Christ, who had been given a new revelation by God. After the rebellion was crushed, the missionaries began by about 1865 to take advantage of the privileges accruing to them under the treaties and spread into the interior like a flood. They established churches and around these churches grew up small communities. Protected by foreign authority these converts looked down upon the Chinese and took up an aggressive attitude towards them. According to Tseng Kuofan, the greatest statesman of the Empress Dowager's time in China,\*\* "the missionaries have created trouble everywhere. The native converts are given to oppressing those who will not embrace Christianity and the missionaries always screen the converts, while the consuls protect the missionaries."

An enormous organization representing every sect of Christian belief was built up over the entire territory of China.

\*\*Tseng Kuo fan was also the military leader who led the counterattack against the Taiping rebellion and succeeded in crushing it. (Eds.)

<sup>\*</sup> The Taiping rebellion (1850-64) was a major political and religious upheaval against the Manchu dynasty and is said to have claimed 20 million lives. Its leader, Hung Hsiu-chuan, proclaimed his own new dynasty, the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, with himself as the Heavenly King, and called for the sharing of all property; as a result, peasants and workers joined in, creating a disciplined but fanatical army which took over Nanking. Military clashes and slaughters followed, until a besieged Hung Hsiu-chuan committed suicide. The rebellion ended, leaving the Ch'ing (or Manchu) dynasty much weakened. (Eds.)

For example, the China Inland Mission established in 1866 had as many as 262 stations, while the Catholic Church had partitioned the whole of China into bishoprics.

But there was not a single province or area during all this time where the common man, as well as the mandarin, did not make it clear that the missionary was an unwelcome intruder. Prince Kung said to the British Minister: "Take away your opium and your missionaries and you will be welcome." Not a single year passed without violent manifestations in some town or other against missionary activity. The Boxer rebellion could only be understood against this background. It was the missionary and the "secondary devil," the convert, who were the special objects of the Boxer's fury. Indeed the Chinese Christians had to pay dearly for being "secondary devils" suspected to be the supporters of foreign aggressors.

In Japan, the activities of the missionaries were more hedged round. Though the Emperor in the Charter Oath (1868) had asked his subjects "to seek knowledge throughout the world," yet on the same day an official notification appeared in which it was declared that the "evil sect of the Christians is forbidden as heretofore." The reply to the protests of the foreign Powers was that public feeling against Christianity could only be modified slowly, and the Powers must depend on the changed situation for a full policy of religious tolerance to be made effective in Japan. In the meantime the authorities went forward vigorously with their programme of Shinto revival, identifying patriotism and loyalty to the throne with this national creed.

When the Japanese leaders were satisfied that the national position was strong enough to allow Christianity to be practised openly, they announced, as a measure of further reform, the principle of religious toleration (1873). One of the reasons for taking this step was the realization that extraterritoriality could not be abolished unless the Western world was persuaded that there was freedom for Christian activity.

By the time Christianity officially ceased to be "an evil sect"

within the Empire the Shinto religion had been strengthened and the chances of any large scale conversion to Christianity had vanished. The missionaries also realized that the recognition of the rights of Christians represented an attitude of studied neglect which was not helpful to the church. Also it is important to remember that the missionaries in Japan never secured the protection clauses which gave them practically suzerain rights in China.

The general revival of the Eastern religions by the end of the nineteenth century saw also a marked revival of Buddhism in Japan, especially of the Amida sect. From the last decade of the century, Buddhist scholarship developed in universities. This was shown in the works of scholars like Suzuki. Finally, the educational system in Japan was under national control and Christian teachings were suspected to be in conflict with the tradition of state dominance enjoined by Shintoism.

By the end of the nineteenth century Japan had emerged as a strong Power after the victory over China. The abolition of extraterritoriality which followed and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that was negotiated gave to Japan a position of equality with other nations and with this the prospects of mission work in that country ceased to be of any great importance.

#### South-East Asia

The history of Christianity in South-East Asia has also to be noticed. Early in the seventeenth century Alexandre de Rhodes, of the Society of Jesus, started his work (1624-27) among Japanese Christian refugees at Faifo [modern Hoi An] in Annam [central Vietnam, at the time governed by the French]. Disappointed with the meagre results of his mission he returned to Europe to interest the Holy See in this venture. Cold shouldered in Rome Father de Rhodes found warm support in France where the *Mission Étrangères* (founded in 1659) took up the work in earnest. Some businessmen in Rouen

had established a society for the double purpose of trade and religion. It was in their ship that Bishop Lambert, selected by Father Alexandre de Rhodes for this mission, reached Tongking [Tonkin, northern Vietnam] in the guise of a merchant (1662). The Trinh monarchs of Tongking however showed no desire to welcome missionary activity though they were willing to encourage trade with France in spite of Dutch opposition. The Dutch soon succeeded in destroying the French factory at Tongking, and the local people remained indifferent to the new religion. So there was nothing to report for nearly a century.

It was in 1765 that Pigneau de Behaine, a missionary of the Mission Etrangères, began his work in Cochin China [southern Vietnam]. He was nominated Bishop of Adran in 1774. The bishop was able to render great service to the Nguen King of Hué who was then a homeless wanderer. In order to further the interests of the King in exile the bishop went to France and negotiated a treaty under which France promised to help the King regain his throne. As the promise was not carried out, Pigneau de Behaine fitted out an expedition at his own expense and restored the King to his kingdom. At the very moment of his victory the militant bishop died (1799). On account of the revolutionary struggles in France no advantage could be taken of this signal success of the French missionary. When the Bourbon restoration took place the new Emperor of Annam, Minh Mang, had become very hostile to Christian activity. In 1848 Emperor Tu Duc declared the religion of Jesus to be a "perverse religion" and ordered ministers of this religion to be thrown into the sea.

These aggressive denunciations provided Napoleon III with an excuse for military intervention. But as T. E. Ennis writes in his *French Policy and Development in Indo-China* (1936): "Forty-two years after the French had taken possession of the country, missionary efforts were not imposing." Here, as elsewhere, Christianity under the patronage of imperialism failed to attract the Asian mind.

Both in Siam and Burma the strength of Buddhism reduced the chance of large-scale conversion to Christianity. In Burma the missionaries, profiting by their experience in India, tended to concentrate their activities among backward tribes; and among the Karens they met with some success. There was thus considerable missionary sympathy for Karen separatism — a movement which at one stage was a major threat to the cause of Burmese independence.\*

In Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country, Christian missionary activity was insignificant after the first efforts under the Portuguese, especially those of Francis Xavier. A main factor in the history of Indonesia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the growth and development of Islam among the pagan tribes in the interior.

### The twentieth century

We have now to trace the history in the present century. By the beginning of the twentieth century the growing sentiment of nationalism and the vigour with which Hinduism reacted left the Christian missionaries in India with but little chance of success. It is significant to note that the leaders of nationalism in India at the beginning of this century were themselves stout champions of a resurgent Hinduism. One of the main contributions of Bal Gangadhar Tilak to nationalism was his interpretation of the teachings of the Gita in terms of modern political life. Lajpat Rai was one of the leaders of the Arya-Samaj, the militant puritanical sect of Hinduism which had helped to strengthen Hindu society in North India. Aurobindo Ghosh and his group of aggressive nationalists were fervent Hindus. In the south, in spite of vigorous Christian propaganda and fairly numerous conver-

<sup>\*</sup> Separatism is a frequent by-product of evangelization, as anyone familiar with the history of India's North-East and other tribal regions knows. (Eds.)

sions among the "untouchables," the authority of orthodox Hinduism had never been seriously challenged.

Apart from the general loss of prestige which the West suffered as a result of the First Great War, the growth of nationalism, which ceased to be merely a movement of the intelligentsia, affected missionary prospects adversely. The Christian leaders in India themselves began to feel that too obvious a separation from their countrymen could not benefit them. Christianity began to show interest in Indian culture. The Heritage of India, a series of small volumes published under the auspices of the Christian National Council of India, was the first indication of this change in attitude. In fact by the beginning of the third decade of the century, the Indian Christian community had in the main shaken off the control of the Western missionaries.\*

Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on the removal of untouchability as an essential step in political reform took away from the missionaries what seemed to be their last profitable line of approach, for missionary activity after failing with the intellectuals, had been concentrated on the depressed classes. By way of reaction to the changed situation the churches in England instituted and encouraged movements for a national church in India. The Catholic Church, which had a better appreciation of the position, adjusted its work to the spiritual care of Christians, without emphasizing its missionary aspect.

In China, Christian hopes rose again after the fall of the Manchu Dynasty. Sun Yat-sen, the leader of New China, was a Christian. But he soon showed that he was more interested in the greatness and welfare of China than in the promotion of Christianity. The disappointment which Sun Yat-sen felt at the

<sup>\*</sup>However, Christian missionary organizations have pursued to this day the old policy of seeking official patronage and the "protection" of the State; independent India generously extended such patronage, heedless of the fact that she was in effect granting the right to prey upon the unorganized and defenceless Hindu communities. (Eds.)

attitude of the Christian Powers of the West and the influence which the October Revolution in Russia exercised on him led him away further and further from the missionaries to whom at one time he seemed to have looked for support. Moreover the rising tide of nationalism, against unequal treaties and against imperialism, was unfavourable to Christianity. The leaders of the "New Tide" renaissance were frankly agnostic, and to them Christianity was but another manifestation of superstition, this time under a foreign garb. The Anti-Christian Federation, founded in Shanghai in 1922, asserted that Christianity was an ally of capitalism and imperialism and thus an instrument for oppressing weaker nations.

The Anti-Religious Federation organized by the Peking University students vigorously expressed its views in numerous pamphlets giving the whole story of the growth of mission work under the protection of extraterritoriality and as a handmaid of capitalist exploitation of China. That the missionaries had benefited by the weakness of China now became a serious charge against them.

Also during this period the position of the mission schools became a burning issue. The fifth annual congress of the Young China Association (1924) passed a resolution which read: "We strongly oppose Christian education which destroys the national spirit of our people." Next year the Peking Government promulgated regulations for the control of foreign educational institutions.

In this crisis the foreign missionaries found themselves deserted by their Chinese converts. The Chinese Christians were anxious in this period not to be considered "secondary barbarians" or "running dogs" of the missionaries and generally sided with the nationalist movement.

Side by side with the patronage which the Kuomintang extended to the missions during the war with Japan, when Chiang Kai-shek depended so much on American and British support, there was developing under the direction of Chen lifu, the new Confucianism which found expression in Chiang's own book, "China's Destiny." China as a great field for Christian missions proved as great a mirage as India or Japan. But China suffered more from missionary activities than these other two countries. In India, Hindu society was able to resist missionary aggression, and in Japan the preventive action of the government helped to uphold the organic structure of the society. But in China the systematic undermining of social bonds through seventy-five years of missionary action under the protection of imperialist Powers led to the Revolution of 1948. Anarchical conditions in China were expected to be favourable to missionary hopes. Anarchical conditions did come about in Chinese society, but the beneficiaries were others.

### The failure of missionary work in Asia

We may conclude this survey with a few observations on the causes of the failure of mission activity in Asia. It cannot be denied that the attempt to convert Asia has definitely failed. In China, where conditions seemed to be particularly favourable, the collapse has been most complete.

The success of the missions need not have been so meagre but for certain factors which may be discussed now. In the first place, the missionary brought with him an attitude of moral superiority and a belief in his own exclusive righteousness. The doctrine of the monopoly of truth and revelation, as claimed by William of Rubruck to Batu Khan when he said "he that believeth not shall be condemned by God," is alien to the Hindu and Buddhist mind. To them the claim of any sect that it alone possesses the truth and others shall be "condemned" has always seemed unreasonable.

Secondly the association of Christian missionary work with aggressive imperialism introduced political complications. National sentiment could not fail to look upon missionary activity as inimical to the country's interests. That diplomatic pressure, extraterritoriality and sometimes support of

gunboats had been resorted to in the interests of the foreign missionaries could not be easily forgotten.

Thirdly, the sense of European superiority which the missionaries perhaps unconsciously inculcated produced also its reaction. Even during the days of unchallenged European political supremacy no Asian people accepted the cultural superiority of the West. The educational activities of the missionaries stressing the glories of European culture only led to the identification of the work of the missions with Western cultural aggression.

Fourthly, the wide variety of Christian sects, each proclaiming the errors of others, handicapped missionary work. Finally the growth of unbelief in Europe in the nineteenth century and the crisis in European civilization, following the Great War of 1914-18, and the October Revolution, broke whatever spell the different sects of Christianity had among certain classes of Asians. With the disappearance of European dominance Christianity assumed its natural position as one of the religions of Asia and the missionaries ceased to have any special or privileged position.

क्ष व्य

## Thus Spake Francis Xavier

In the preceding article, K. M. Panikkar refers to Francis Xavier's "dogmatism and intolerance [which] were the outcome of his blind faith." The following extracts from Francis Xavier's own letters (most of them dating from 1543) show that this statement is no exaggeration.

(From a letter of 1543 to his fellow Jesuits at the Society of Jesus, Rome) It is now the third year since I left Portugal. . . . I and Francis Mancias are now living amongst the Christians of Comorin. They are very numerous, and increase largely every day. . . . We held meetings for several days, and by our joint efforts and with infinite difficulty we translated the Catechism into the Malabar tongue. This I learnt by heart, and then I began to go through all the villages of the coast, calling around me by the sound of a bell as many as I could, children and men. I assembled them twice a day and taught them the Christian doctrine: and thus, in the space of a month, the children had it well by heart. And all the time I kept telling them to go on teaching in their turn whatever they had learnt to their parents, family, and neighbours. . . .

The fruit that is reaped by the baptism of infants, as well as by the instruction of children and others, is quite incredible. These children, I trust heartily, by the grace of God, will be much better than their fathers. They show an ardent love for the Divine law, and an extraordinary zeal for learning our holy religion and imparting it to others. Their hatred for idolatry is marvellous. They get into feuds with the heathen [i.e. the Hindus] about it, and whenever their own parents practise it, they reproach them and come off to tell me at once. Whenever I hear of any act of idolatrous worship, I go to the place with a large band of these children, who very soon load the devil with a greater amount of insult and abuse than he has lately received of honour and worship from their parents,

relations, and acquaintances. The children run at the idols, upset them, dash them down, break them to pieces, spit on them, trample on them, kick them about, and in short heap on them every possible outrage. . . .

There is now in these parts a very large number of persons who have only one reason for not becoming Christian, and that is that there is no one to make them Christians. It often comes into my mind to go round all the Universities of Europe, and especially that of Paris, crying out everywhere like a madman, and saying to all the learned men there whose learning is so much greater than their charity, "Ah! what a multitude of souls is through your fault shut out of heaven and falling into hell!"\*...

We have in these parts a class of men among the pagans who are called Brahmins. They keep up the worship of the gods, the superstitious rites of religion, frequenting the temples and taking care of the idols. They are as perverse and wicked a set as can anywhere be found, and I always apply to them the words of holy David, "From an unholy race and a wicked and crafty man deliver me, O Lord." They are liars and cheats to the very backbone. Their whole study is, how to deceive most cunningly the simplicity and ignorance of the people. They give out publicly that the gods command certain offerings to be made to their temples, which offerings are simply the things that the Brahmins themselves wish for, for their own maintenance and that of their wives, children, and servants.

These Brahmins have barely a tincture of literature, but they

<sup>\*</sup> However unbelievable this may appear to the Hindu mind — or simply to reason and humane sense — zealous Christians were, and often are, convinced not only that those who refuse their message are condemned to eternal hell, but, in addition, that all those unfortunate enough to have lived before Jesus's time or before his messengers could reach out to them, must also have taken permanent lodgings there. This makes the Christian hell a very crowded place, a belief which has been often and

make up for their poverty in learning by cunning and malice.\* ... They often send me a civil message and presents, and make a great complaint when I send them all back again. Their object is to bribe me to connive at their evil deeds. ... If it were not for the opposition of the Brahmins, we should have them all embracing the religion of Jesus Christ. ... All the time I have been here in this country I have only converted one Brahmin, a virtuous young man, who has now undertaken to teach the Catechism to children. ...

The Indians being black themselves, consider their own colour the best, they believe that their gods are black. On this account the great majority of their idols are as black as black can be, and moreover are generally so rubbed over with oil as to smell detestably, and seem to be as dirty as they are ugly and horrible to look at. . . . \*\*

CB

When I have finished baptising the people, I order them to destroy the huts in which they keep their idols; and I have them break the statues of their idols into tiny pieces, since they are now Christians. I could never come to an end describing to

<sup>\*</sup> Such demonization of Brahmins as a whole soon became a standard practice of missionaries, for the good reason that they constituted a major obstacle to conversions, as Francis Xavier himself admits; we will see Abbé Dubois repeating such language almost word for word later in this Part 3. Although it is always possible to find degenerate individuals in any community, many Kerala Brahmins went through great austerities to learn by heart and transmit the Vedas generation after generation, and to painstakingly copy lakhs of manuscripts on every possible topic, many of them hardly explored even today. The "poverty in learning" noticed by Francis must have been a case of mirror image. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> See Henry James Coleridge, ed., *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 1890), vol. I, pp. 151-163; reprinted in William H. McNeil and Mitsuko Iriye, eds., *Modern Asia and Africa, Readings in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), vol. 9, pp. 4-11.

you the great consolation which fills my soul when I see idols being destroyed by the hands of those who had been idolaters.\*

03

(From a letter to John III, King of Portugal, of 16 May 1545 at Goa) The second necessity for the Christians is that Your Majesty establish the Holy Inquisition, because there are many who live according to the Jewish law, and according to the Mahomedan sect, without any fear of God or shame of the world. And since there are many who are spread all over the fortresses, there is the need of the Holy Inquisition and of many preachers. Your Majesty should provide such necessary things for your loyal and faithful subjects in India.\*\*

CB

<sup>\*</sup> From The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier, 1993, pp. 118. (A slightly different translation is given in P. Rayanna, St. Francis Xavier and His Shrine (Goa: Bombay Jesus Basilica, 1982), p. 105.)

\*\* Joseph Wicki, Documenta Indica (Rome: 1956), vol. IV, pp. 229-30.

# KERALA, THE GATEWAY TO INDIAN CHRISTIANITY

Dr. C. I. Issac\*

This article provides an overview of the history of Christianity in Kerala. Built on authentic and wide-ranging material, it exposes some of the many myths and fabrications that have been passed off as history.

An historical narrative of Indian Christianity would be incomplete without the study of Christianity in Kerala. Christianity is believed to have reached the shores of Kerala in the first century AD, though this is not supported by documentary or authentic evidence. The emergence and spread of Christianity in Kerala is shrouded in such myths and legends.

Kerala's Christian past is essentially the story of the Church building its history on the fragile foundations of theology and belief. Therefore, historians encounter many problems in reconstructing its past. First is the question of the arrival of St. Thomas and the subsequent conversion of upper-class Hindus to Christianity. Second, the date of origin of Christianity in Kerala.

To do justice to the study, it is convenient to divide this vast period of time under consideration into precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods.

<sup>\*</sup>The author is a history professor in Kerala and a historian; he has authored numerous academic papers and articles on Kerala's history. (Eds.)

# The Precolonial Phase

The St. Thomas legend

The native Church's claimed story of Saint Thomas (one of the twelve direct disciples of Christ) and of the early origins of Indian Christianity is not a universally accepted one. In the year 1952, the native Catholic Church approached the Papacy in Rome for pontifical approval to celebrate the 1900<sup>th</sup> year of proselytism in Kerala since the arrival of St. Thomas on its shores. The Papacy declined the request of the Kerala Catholics on the ground that the claim has no historicity. In spite of this denial, the Catholic *Savarna*, the Syrian descendants of those said to have received baptism from St. Thomas, celebrated the 19<sup>th</sup> centenary of his arrival with much pomp.

The only historical record pertaining to the arrival of St. Thomas is *The Acts of St. Thomas*, a historical romance written in Syrian towards the end of the second or the beginning of the third century AD.<sup>1</sup> However, there is no mention of the Malabar Coast in this book; the only relevant reference is that Thomas died at Mazda. The advocates of the St. Thomas tradition of Christianity in Kerala believe that Mazda is Madai in Malabar.

Before the arrival of the Portuguese, there was no Christian population to the north of Kodungalloor, i.e., the Malabar region of Kerala. According to Ward and Conner, even two centuries after the birth of Christianity, the number of Christians on the Malabar coast shrank to eight families.<sup>2</sup> Another church historian of Kerala, P. Cheriyan, remarks that:

... there has existed on the Malabar Coast from the earliest centuries of our era a body of Christians, quite isolated from the rest of Christendom, as a beacon of light, however dim, in the midst of a vast non-Christian population.<sup>3</sup>

It was only when Portuguese came that conversion started in India.<sup>4</sup>

In the year 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued a bull\* by which he granted to the king of Portugal the right to conquer the kingdoms of heathens and Mohammedans. The king of Portugal also obtained from Pope Calixtus III (1455-58) the exclusive right of all kingdoms of Asia and Africa, by which he styled himself as the temporal and spiritual leader of all Eastern countries (see D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar*, vol. II).

By ritual and custom, Kerala Christians were Hindus; by faith they slightly differed, but this difference was not conspicuous.<sup>5</sup> In short, the Christian society of Kerala was not much different from their Hindu counterparts except for the *upasana moorthy* [deity of worship]. No doubt, the members of various *upasana* systems mutually respected each other's *upasana moorthy*.

The Church believes that St. Thomas reached the shores of Kerala in the first century AD and established seven and a half churches — seven big and a small one. The debatable story of St. Thomas's direct mission activity in Kerala is a later addition targeted at protecting the vested interests of the Church. The origin of this story goes back to the days of the Portuguese. Their objectives were:

- to establish Roman ecclesiastical authority over Kerala's Christianity;
- 2. to destroy all the Hindu practices, rituals and traditions that were retained by the native Christians;
- 3. to extend the Latin Christendom to the soil of the Hindus.

Before the arrival of Europeans in Kerala, a Christian presence was seen only in the Travancore and Cochin regions of Kerala. The antagonism between Christians and Muslims in the wake of the Crusades of the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries prevented Kerala proselytism enterprises from planting their

<sup>\*</sup> A papal bull is a decree or edict issued by the Pope. (Eds.)

roots in the Malabar region, where Islam had entered much earlier. (It is only during the British period that the Christian society became significant in Malabar.) That is why the legendary belief of seven and a half churches has not extended to Malabar. The fact that all the eight churches of the legend are located either in the Travancore or in the Cochin regions is an irony in the St. Thomas legend. From the arrival of Portuguese to the early decades of the nineteenth century, there were fewer than 300 Christian churches of all denominations in Kerala.<sup>6</sup>

### Did St. Thomas convert Namboothiris?

The problem does not end here. There is a general belief among Syrian Christians of Kerala that the disciple Thomas converted certain Namboothiri families (a native Brahmin jati) into Christianity and parenthetically the Christian society came into being here. One has to examine the veracity of this conversion theory. Now, central Kerala is the abode of a major chunk of the Syrian Christian population. Let us see their food habits: no doubt, they are no exception to the Christian practice of non-vegetarianism; large-scale cow slaughter takes place in central Kerala, the chief consumers being the Syrian Christians. The ancient beef-eating community, prior to the arrival of Christianity, was the Parayas [Candalas] of Kerala. Tradition says that the Parayas were a noble class of ancient Kerala and sons of saint Vasishtha; their craze for beef led to their ostracism by the rest of the jatis. Above all, because of this beef-eating habit, the Namboothiri Brahmins who arrived later did a lot to isolate them from the Hindu mainstream. Even though these stories bear no historicity, they can give some hints to the process of societal polarization.

Moreover, in the two thousand years of their fabled existence, Kerala's Christians produced no literary piece of excellence and showed no dazzling talent in the cultural field, except in the colonial-missionary discourse and the postcolonial

period. The two millenniums of Christian life in Kerala were only a passing episode in the artistic as well as intellectual history of this land. The only prominent art form to the credit of the Christians of Kerala is *Margamkali*, a dance performance which, however, cannot compare with traditional art forms of Kerala like *Kooth, Koodiyattom, Patakom, Kathakali, Kalarippayattu*, etc. The songs of *Margamkali*, the only art form specific to the Syrian Christians, are composed in modern Malayalam; they are not an old art form as claimed, but date from after the Portuguese. In the *Margamkali* presentation, the influence of minor art forms like *Velakali*, *Pulikkali*, etc., acan be seen, but none from the elite art forms of Kerala.

Therefore, the *Namboothiri* conversion theory has no historicity; it is an imaginative exercise of later years. Historians of Kerala swiftly rejected or accounted for it as a legend, but the Church hierarchy of all factions has retained it as an alternative history. Moreover, in the history of social formations of ancient Kerala, up to the fourth century CE this land was occupied by non-Vedic settlements only. So the *Namboothiris* as a Vedic Brahmin *jati* in Kerala were seen only after the fourth century CE. Prominent historiographers of Kerala like William Logan or Elamkulam Kunjanpillai are of the opinion that the Kerala Brahmins or *Namboothiris* reached this land in the seventh and eighth centuries CE. <sup>10</sup>

The question arises how a man called St. Thomas who never reached Kerala converted non-existent *Namboothiris* in the first century. Is this a proselytising rationale? The theory of the *Namboothiri* origin of the Syrian Christianity will be useful for the penetration of the Church into the *jati*-oriented Hindu community.

### A nonexistent copperplate

Since the Portuguese days, the Church has laboured to enhance the frontiers of the Christendom in Kerala and produced some forged documents in support of the first-century origin of Kerala Christianity and its aristocratic foundation. One such document is known as the Kanaai Thomman Copperplate of 345 CE, which was obtained from one of the Kerala kings of the days. The customary belief amongst the Kananaya<sup>11</sup> Syrian Christian community is that in 345 CE one Perumal or king (his name is not known to them)12, who ruled Kodungalloor, gave a copperplate grant to Thomas of Canaan, by which the King bestowed a set of trading as well as socioreligious prerogatives (the 72 Prerogatives) to the Kananaya Svrian Christian community. But there is no such original copperplate grant nor any reliable evidence in their possession to prove this claim. 13 It is only a fabulous story orally transmitted through generations and has no historicity. Instead of the original document, they are keeping the copy of a forged document originally written in Portuguese. 14 But there is no probability of such a document being issued in a European language by a fourth-century Kerala ruler.

In a different context, king Bhaskara Ravi Varman I issued a copperplate grant to the Jewish community in the vernacular (Malayalam) in the tenth century, which is still in the possession of the Jewish community. The Kananaya Syrian Christians' excuse that their copperplate was misplaced in the deluge of time is therefore not justifiable. Details of the vanished copperplate grant are amusing: it is highly paradoxical that all the dates in this copperplate grant are in the months of the Kollam Era (of the Malayalam Almanac), which was introduced much later — in 825 CE. $^{15}$  In addition, "till about 800 AD Kerala was almost a part of Tamilakaom and the language of the region was Tamil with its own peculiar local characteristics."16 But the language of the supposedly fourth-century grant is the Malayalam of the late medieval period, and Malayalam became a transactional language only in the nineteenth century: before that, all documents in Kerala were prepared in the language of Tamil with Granthashram or Vettezhuthu script. 17

One cannot but conclude that the story centred on the copperplate grant is imaginary. It is the handiwork of the

Portuguese missionaries, who were notorious for fabricating stories and documents. The text of the so-called copperplate grant of 345 CE is therefore unreliable, both judiciously and in the eyes of history.

### The beginnings of Christianity in Kerala

How did Christianity reach Kerala? It is a genuine question and comes to the mind of every student of history. Christ, like Buddha, is associated with caravan merchants; his disciples and apostles followed the path of their master and in their task of spreading the message, accompanied the merchant community. The age-old mercantile relation of Kerala with the Western world paved the way for Christianity.

The first Christians of Kerala may have been members of the merchant community hailing from the new faith who overstayed for their business. To substantiate this argument, let us look at the birth of Black Jews. Jewish merchants travelled far and wide as a part of their mercantile activities since the very beginning of long-distance trade. In their short stay at distant parts of the world, they usually married local ladies and the progenies of these affairs formed the Black Jews. In this regard, we have the account of François Pyrard de Laval, a French traveller to Kerala (1607), who testified that ancient Kerala women of certain *jatis* practised unrestricted sex. <sup>18</sup>\* So the first Christians of Kerala may be the offspring of the concubines of such merchants. The social system of Kerala justifies this social process. <sup>19</sup> And the native Christians' interest in agriculture and trade reflects this interracial

<sup>\*</sup> Accounts of early European travellers to India are notorious for their colourful fancies. Voltaire wrote in his *Historical Fragments on India* (1773), "When trying to know the true history of this nation [India], its government, its religion and customs, we have found the compilations of our French authors to be of no help. The writers who transcribed fables for booksellers, our missionaries and our travellers have almost never told us the truth." Unless corroborated by other sources, Pyrard de Laval's account must therefore be viewed with caution. (Eds.)

origin. The fact that till recently most Christians used foreign languages in their liturgy also supports this argument.

Real Christian migration happened here in the seventh and eighth centuries as part of the refugee inflow from the Eastern Roman Empire. The defeat of the Byzantine regime at the hands of the Umayyads and the Muslim expansion resulted in the end of Christianity in Jerusalem, Syria and Persia, and all the way to Morocco. "As the trading operations were lost forever, the Christians who refused to convert to Islam were forced to again migrate to India."<sup>20</sup>

The threat posed by Islam in Persia from the seventh century onwards caused an influx of Christians as refugees to this land; this added to Kerala's Christian population. Even after the Persian Christian migration, the Christian population remained as a marginal group in this tiny region until the European occupation. Several travellers' accounts and early Christian documents refer to the emaciated conditions of the native Christians. It is certain that the first batch of Christians reached here as refugees like the Parsis in Gujarat. That the early Christians were confined to Kerala's port towns and followed the Syriac liturgy is sufficient proof. Above all, the earliest documents referring to Christianity in Kerala date only from 849 CE onwards. Christianity reached ancient Kerala not through a purposeful effort or conscious attempt, but as an accidental event.

The Christians of Kerala never claimed any letters, gospels or epistles of Thomas as evidence of his visits. The epistles of the New Testaments cover instructions to the newly formed churches in various regions, but none mentions the existence of an Eastern Church or a Christian society in India.

The St. Theresa Church copperplate grant (*Terisapalli Cheppedu*) executed in 849 CE by Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal of Venadu during the reign of Emperor Sthanu Ravi (844-855) is the oldest available historical document linking Christianity to Kerala.<sup>21</sup> Another early bona fide reference is the sixth-century travel account of an Egyptian Christian monk, Cosmas Indicopleustes.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of Kerala, *chaturvarnam* (the fourfold caste system) as seen elsewhere in India was not completely applicable. Here, the social stratification was limited to two broad orders of Brahmins and Sudras; this social stratification, together with the addition of sixty-four *jatis* and several *avanta jatis* (later additions based on new occupations), constituted the ancient Kerala society.<sup>23</sup>

The savarna feeling of Kerala Christians derives from the wealth they had acquired through the spice trade during the European period, and the Portuguese pre-eminence in the Church. The Syrian Christians got a special status in Kerala's history only after the arrival of the Europeans, particularly the British. Till then they were functioning as one among the Sudra jati, like the Nairs or the Ezhavas, <sup>24</sup> occupied with trade, agriculture, "uliam" work to the temples, etc.

The testimony of the sixth-century traveller Cosmas Indicopleustes is sufficient to determine the social status of Syrian Christians in early Kerala. The hard-working Christian community gained much through the increased spice trade and European support from the time of the Portuguese interlude. The wealth acquired through the cultivation of cash crops and the European pressure on native rajas created a social position for Christians in general. Thus they began to think of tradition and aristocracy. The result was the birth of the legend of St. Thomas and the conversion of *Namboothiris*. The story purposefully catered the needs of native as well as alien Christian interests in the changing social scenario.

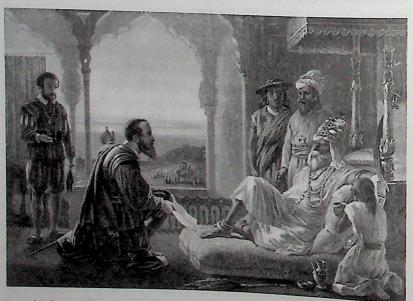
### 11

# Colonial Phase of Christianity in Kerala

The arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1498 marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of Kerala's native Christians as well as the society as a whole. The impact of the Portuguese

on the native socioeconomic and religious life was farreaching. Their intolerance and bigotry was a new experience to the natives. Even native Christians were not spared. Pope Nicolas V issued a Bull on 8 January 1454 by which the king of Portugal got moral and pragmatic rights over the lands that they reached. The Bull read, "All the lands and seas that have been discovered or will be discovered belong for ever to the king of Portugal." The Church extended its full support to the commercial as well as colonial ambitions of the Portuguese: colonial forces and missionary forces travelled together in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The Pontifical support extended to the Portuguese had far-reaching consequences in the case of India.

As we have seen, Kerala's Christian community remained in the coastal trading centres and their suburbs during the seven hundred years prior to the operation of European colonial-missionary nexus, with a negligible population, and



A nineteenth-century representation of Vasco da Gama being welcomed by the Hindu ruler of Calicut in 1498.

Syrian Christian life was only a passing episode in Kerala's cultural history.<sup>2</sup> The correct pattern of their demographic distribution was only available after the census efforts of the British in India. Anyhow, the unprecedented increase of the Christian community was noticed in the later census reports of the British period.

Kerala's Christian community, even though they were marginal, extended their full support to the Portuguese by presenting their "silver stick" (which had been given them by the native Hindu raja) to Vasco da Gama as a symbol of their recognition, on the ground that he was a Christian.<sup>3</sup> It was truly the beginning of the end of the native Christian identity. The Portuguese and their missionary bands were eager to make the tiny Christian community that flourished here a part of Roman Catholicism by alienating them from the native cultural domain. To them, the native Christianity was an eyesore because they were more Hindu than Christian. Also, the native Church was free from bigotry.

### The Synod of Diamper

First, they attempted to Romanize/Latinize the native Church. They started seminaries through which they injected Western concepts to the native Christian leaders and priests. The native Christian community had so far been governed by the members of the parish in accordance with the laws of the land. "This assembly seems to owe its origin to the traditional village assembly of the Dravidians known as *Manram* which was the responsible and authoritative body at the village level." In order to govern the native Church on behalf of the Pope, the Portuguese and the Roman Missionary bands founded a Bishopric at Cochin in 1557. Their seminary began to function from Kodungalloor, and the Jesuit College from Cochin, but it failed to get the desired results. Then they decided to influence the Christians through a well-established native system of assembly (pothuyogam); in 1559, they

summoned such a native Christian assembly under the presidentship of the Archbishop of Goa, Alexis de Menezes, at Udayamperoor, popularly known as the Synod of Diamper.<sup>5</sup>

This Synod issued religious instructions along with certain directions intending to cut off the Hindu character and practices of the native Christians. Some of the Synod's decisions, aimed at destroying the native Christian identity, are the following:

- 1. Christians were ordered to give up their early practice of using Hindu names;
- 2. priests were asked to wear the gowns and cassocks of the Roman Church;
- 3. the practice of tying a *thali* around the neck of the bride on the occasion of marriage was prohibited;
- 4. the traditional native Christian practice of taking bath before entering the church and abstinence from beef were declared unnecessary and un-Christian practices;
- 5. taking part in the Hindu festivals such as *Onam, Vishu, Utsavams* (festivals) of temples, etc. was declared un-Christian;
- 6. the practice of consulting astrologers was declared a crime; and
- 7. marriages were to be held inside the church instead of the native manner of solemnizing them at the residence of the bride or the groom.<sup>6</sup>

All these decisions were implemented by the organizers of the Synod at the point of the bayonet. The Syrian books were scrutinized and offending passages expunged; heretical books were burnt. The Holy Mass of the Syriac liturgy was altered in conformity with the Latin Mass. Above all, the work of the Synod compelled the native Christians to shift their political loyalty from the native kings to the King of Portugal.

Many valuable cultural models such as dress patterns, art forms, rituals and practices, etc. used by the "Hindu-Christians" of Kerala were either defaced or shattered by the

Portuguese-Catholic onslaught over Malabar Christianity. This Portuguese-Catholic attempt to de-Hinduize the Malabar Christianity was the graveyard of the Syrian Christian-Hindu morphology. The still surviving cultural models, which overcame time and European onslaughts, to a certain extent, can be used to gain some insight into the sociocultural morphological aspects of Syrian Christians.

The indiscriminate conversion programme caused the transplanting of the Hindu jati hierarchical problems into the native Christian fabric as well. The Synod's interference in the native Church caused a quarrel between the Syrian Christians and the Portuguese.<sup>10</sup> In 1653, the native Christians invited a Syrian bishop from Babylon. The Portuguese at Mylapore detained the Syrian bishop on his way to Kerala. The news of his detention spread amongst the Syrian Christians and invited their wrath: hundreds of them assembled in front of an ancient Cross at Mattancherry near Cochin on 15 January 1653, tied a lengthy coir rope on it and "holding on to it swore that they would never more obey the Latin Archbishops or the Jesuits."11 This incident is known in the history of Kerala as the "Oath of Coonan Cross." Thereupon the native Church split into two. During the British period also, the Church continued to be divided.

## Francis Xavier and temple demolition

The native Christians regarded Christianity as another path, as well as an *upasana* system.<sup>13</sup> It had so far never functioned as a distinct religion. Even the names of native Christians were Hindu such as *Chathan, Kotha, Iravi, Kandan,* etc.<sup>14</sup> After the Portuguese arrival, a large-scale aggressive proselytising movement started in Kerala under the stewardship of a padre called Francis Xavier. His eight-year stay in South India changed the entire course of its history. In this short period, he was able to enhance the numerical strength of Kerala's Christian population. He was no different from Mohammed

Ghazni or Aurangzeb in the space of proselytizing enterprise. Francis Xavier was the man solely responsible for the establishment of the Inquisition Court in Goa in 1560, under which Hindu women were raped and burned alive and Hindu temples were demolished.<sup>15</sup>

The wrath of the Catholic Church that was started by Francis Xavier in Goa did not spare even innocent children of Hindu origin. This Court of Inquisition functioned in Goa till 1812. Francis Xavier remarked, "I told the new Christians to demolish the shrines of the idols and saw to it that they crushed the images into dust. I could not express to you the consolation it gave me to watch the idols being destroyed by the very hands of those who so recently used to worship them." <sup>16</sup>

Later, he was elevated to the rank of a Saint by the Catholic Church for his cruelties committed on the Hindu population, particularly of Kerala and Goa. His mass-conversion movement was targeted at the then socially low ranks of society, such as the fishermen and the Dalits. In his proselytizing task, he opted for the methods of coaxing, giving of gifts, persecution, etc. The aggressive evangelization programme opened by Francis Xavier some 460 years ago created a strong base for Roman Catholic Church in India; the Christian population increased day by day and is now politically and economically a decisive force in Kerala.

The history of temple annihilation in Kerala starts with Francis Xavier in Travancore-Cochin. It acquired a pragmatic colour in the Malabar regions during the time of the Mysorian invasions. The first organized temple destruction in Kerala took place in the sixteenth century under the stewardship of Francis Xavier. The first victim was the temple at Thevalakkara in Quilon district and Palluruthi near Cochin. To E Souza, the Portuguese governor, made a futile attempt to plunder the shrine at Thirupathi also.

Finally, the Portuguese came to terms with Travancore by which they agreed to abstain from cow slaughter in Travan-

core territory. 18 It is important to consider the information available from the work of C. M. Augur, an English missionary, to paint a correct picture of the Christian intolerance from the days of Padre Francis Xavier to the generations of the contemporary church renovators. According to Augur, in 1816 there were, in the Travancore State, 19,524 temples and 301 churches of all denominations. But in 1891, that is after 76 years, the number of temples had come down to 9,364 and the number of churches had burgeoned to 1,116.19 Another temple demolished by Christian fanaticism during the said period was at Palayoor near Guruvayur. Until the day of the collapse of the disputed structure at Ayodhya, the Palayoor Church authorities kept a board in front of the church which read: "The church was constructed by Saint Thomas after demolishing a temple." (Now the board has been removed.)

In short, most of the claimed eight churches were located either on the ruins of the Hindu temples or near celebrated temples. One such famous church occupied in 1938 and now functioning at Malayattoor, near Adi Sankara's birthplace, was earlier a Shiva temple, as the revenue records of the old princely state of Travancore establish. Considering the geographical area, the number of temples set ablaze or knocked down in Travancore was proportionately much higher than that of temples demolished by the Muslim rulers of Northern India.

The Portuguese did not spare the Muslims of Malabar. The sixteenth-century Muslim Arabic scholar of Kerala (Ponnani), Shaik Zainuddin, in his work *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahiddin*, mentions their plunder and destruction of mosques. They did not spare Kerala's Jews either: to escape the Portuguese persecution, in 1565 the Jews of Crangannoor (at present Kodungalloor) escaped to places of Hindu dominancy such as Paravoor, Mala, Chennamangalam, Ernakulam, etc.

#### Colonial interests

The mission introduced by Francis Xavier continued without let-up throughout the Dutch and the British regimes, and this completed the circle of Christianization of this tiny landscape. The mission was carried on by the British under the disguise of more sophisticated modes of education and modernization of Kerala in general and of the subalterns in particular. The missionaries sowed the tenets of Christ amongst the lower classes, but conveniently evaded the responsibility of elevating them from their long-established sociocultural and economic backwardness.<sup>20</sup>

While examining the European, particularly the Portuguese strategy of proselytism, it is clear that their endeavour was to stabilize the colonial political interests in Hindustan rather than to bring the "Holy Kingdom" on earth. In India, Europeans followed a two-tier policy: to convert the natives to their own religion, and subsequently to create Christians of kin relations, a loyal set of population that would support the colonial interests. The Latin American experience, with the birth of Mestizos & Mulattoes, supports this argument. During the British period, we see the birth of the Anglo-Indian population, and blood relations with Indians through the articulation of the Aryan Invasion Theory.

The Hindu society responded to the missionary onslaughts of the sixteenth century. The society once again, after Adi Sankara, awakened from its torpor. It resulted in the *bhakti* movement of Kerala, pioneered by Tunchat Ezhuthachan (father of the Malayalam language), Melpattur Narayana Bhattatiri, Puntanam Namboothiri, Vilwaamangalm Swamiyar, etc. "Thus the Portuguese period marks an important epoch in the history of *bhakti* movement in Kerala." These movements also contributed a rich corpus of literature, and this period was really the golden age of Malayalam language and literature. At the same time, the Portuguese interlude speeded up the process of Balkanisation of Kerala.

The Vira Kerala Varma (1544-45) of Venad (a Kerala kingdom) extended all facilities to the missionary activities of Francis Xavier in his territory. Vijayanagar, the only powerful Hindu kingdom of the time, objected to Francis Xavier's proselytism and warned the Venad king, but the king followed his lukewarm approach towards the conversion efforts of Christian missionaries. The result was the attack and occupation of Venad by the Vijayanagar army under Ramaraya Vithala.<sup>22</sup> This shows that Hindu society was always responsive to such challenges. Usually, while writing the national history, historians do not properly account for this vital characteristic of Hindu society.

So far, the narration has been on the darker side of the Portuguese-missionary nexus in Kerala. But there were also certain positive impacts on the society. One was the growth of trade relations between Kerala and Europe, which led to a flow of wealth into Kerala through the increased spice trade. Our architecture was considerably influenced by the European contact, as reflected in the construction of churches in Kerala. The Rajas of Kerala got familiarized with artillery weapons. A number of agricultural products like papaya, cashew, pineapple, tobacco, etc. were also introduced here. Coir became an industry and it subsequently helped the growth of the industrial base in Kerala. However, while comparing the merits and demerits of the Portuguese interlude, the demerits outweigh those merits.

The next phase of Indian Christianity begins with the Dutch conquest, which commenced in Kerala with the 1663 capture of Cochin from the Portuguese. The Dutch followed a moderate and lenient religious policy in India. Being Protestants, at first their approach towards Catholics was antagonistic: the beautiful Jesuit Library of Cochin was destroyed and the Dutch soldiers used some of the valuable books to light their cigars; they captured and occupied St. Francis Church, where Vasco da Gama was buried, and turned it into a Protestant Parish; they uprooted all Catholic priests from Cochin and

its suburbs. But after a decade, they altered their religious policy and became the custodians of all denominations of the Christian faith in India. The Dutch built many seminaries in India and were tolerant towards Hindus and Jews also. "The temples or religious institutions of the Hindus were spared from attack during their campaigns." Above all, they respected Hindu customs. In their treaty with the king of Vadakkumkur (1750), they agreed to abstain from harming the temples and slaughtering cows. In Kerala's colonial history, the Dutch period was one of the trouble-free times. Their effort to document the medicinal plants of Kerala through the work *Hortus Malabaricus* with the help of native physicians like Itty Achutan, Appu Bhat, Ranga Bhat and Vinakaya Bhat, is a praiseworthy endeavour from their part.

Denmark attempted to get a foothold in India in the seventeenth century. In 1620, they set up a settlement at Trangampadi (Tranquebar) in Tamil Nadu, and in 1676 at Serampore in Bengal. As Protestants, the Dane saw to it that their settlements functioned as centres of missionary activities. But their colonial ambitions were not fulfilled, and finally they sold their Indian settlements to the British in 1845. Christian missionary activities have continued in those two centres till today.

In 1784, Tippu Sultan, an ally of the French, forcefully converted 60,000 Christians to Islam, but the French ignored the cause of the native Christians. <sup>24</sup> Catholic France had proved its religious intolerance through the persecution of the Protestants. But in India, the French had no time to concentrate on religious affairs because of their internal problems as well as their rivalry with England and its echo in India.

#### 111

# Christianity under the British Umbrella

Protestantism penetrated into the life of Afro-Asian countries

in the wake of colonial enterprises, particularly of the British. Thus the history of Christianity in India in the nineteenth and the early half of the twentieth century is entangled with colonial transactions. Both moved together in the same space. Here, the missionary ventures functioned as a department of colonial endeavour. "The theory of imperialism did not remain an insulated political position in Britain; it became a religious and ethical theory and an integral part of cosmology."1 To see the depth, extent and nature of their task and dream, a closer look at the entire missionary affairs is inevitable. Rt. Rev. Richard Congreve, Bishop of Oxford, commented that "God has entrusted India to the English to hold it for Him. and we have no right to give it up."2 This statement highlights the approach of the missionaries towards the colonized people. Even though the British were Protestants,<sup>3</sup> they liberally extended their support to all Christian denominations of India. Their approach towards proselytism was different from that of early European powers: they were eager to introduce into India Western culture, systems, products etc., and used the missionary enterprises to that end.

In a hierarchical society like ours centred around jati, it is difficult to convert those at the apex of the jati, and missionaries were well aware of this. Therefore, they cast their eyes towards the lower levels of the hierarchy, which form a sizeable portion of Hindu society, and made use of its traditional social disabilities as a stepping stone to pierce into the heart of Hinduism. Their vision was to inject superior Christian / Western social models into the lower strata of jati framework of Hindu society.4 Thus the evangelicals expounded the nineteenth-century English Utilitarian modernity in India in terms of Christian morality:5 their mission was not only mere social transformation but to enhance the kingdom of Providence in the pagan land along with societal reforms. "That it is a duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of Gospel among the Heathen."6 Notwithstanding the differences between colonialism and missionaryism, they were fellow travellers and one in the propagation of Gospel for the promotion of the Christian-Western ways of life.<sup>7</sup>

## European and Christian education

Several eighteenth-century English officers, with Charles Grant as their pioneer, wanted to redesign Indian education on Western lines. This happened only decades later, and in the nineteenth century, the missionaries and the Government gave all encouragements to the new educational system.<sup>8</sup> It is said, "What Grant failed to do through the Government, the Christian missionaries undertook to accomplish in Madras and Bengal."

The nineteenth-century colonial masters of India were enthusiastic about the schooling of the Indian youth in order to transform them into colonial subjects. With this intention, Lord Macaulay prepared his education programme for the natives. India's education pattern even today shares the old colonial views of instruction without much difference. During the British period "much of the educational field was in the hands of Christian missionaries whose ultimate aim obviously was not to strengthen the Hindu race but to convert their pupils to a superior religion, Christianity." Some Hindu leaders also started schools on the colonial pattern, which helped to protect society from the octopus of conversion; nevertheless, they were forced to familiarize their youth with Western Protestant models and rationality. 11

In food and dress habits, rationality, games, furniture, nature of dwelling and other major and minor aspects of lifestyle, the natives began to mimic Westerners. In this process of cultural shift, a minority who received the Western system of education transferred the merits and advantages they had already attained to their subordinates in the society. Thus through the new schooling system they started to teach that "Christian values are ultimately human values." Consequently, they

introduced a two-tier pattern of discipline: "the evangelicals reached out to the lower classes (*avarna jatis*) in Sunday Schools and missionary schools targeted the Indian elites." In Kerala, they concentrated on the establishment of vernacular schools which targeted the subalterns.

It is relevant to quote Macaulay's goal "to create a class of persons who would be Indians in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." Accordingly, education functioned as an instrument of proselytism and schools as extension centres in the Orient of Christian ways of life. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Hindu reformation movements imbibed much from it. "They borrowed their fundamental values from the Western world view and, in spite of their image as orthodox revivalists, were ruthlessly critical of the Hindus." Every aspect of social life then began to be explained by the educated Indians in non-Indian terms. 16

The history of the land had shown that proselytising a Hindu is quite a difficult task. To the Hindu, "every religion is a path that leads to God-realization. There is only one God which is called by various names and which is attainable to any genuine seeker by sincerely following his own path. All the Hindu scriptures have upheld this view."17 That is why to a Hindu the question of conversion is irrelevant. On the other hand, it is easy to make a Hindu a non-committed Hindu through his schooling. The educational vision of the missionaries in pagan lands not only aimed at modernizing their social fabric but wanted to "get the youth outside the Christian faith acquainted with the person of Jesus Christ and His Gospel."18 This is nothing different from the first-century Pauline strategy which was successfully experimented in Athens; it can be made clearer by quoting St. Paul: "For I walked through your city and looked at the places where you worship, I found an altar on which is written, 'To an Unknown God'. That, which you worship, then, even though you do not know it, is what I now proclaim to you."19

The missionary eyes are always in search of the weaker aspects of the targeted society; this is an observable fact that has operated from the first century to the present day with some morphological difference only. During the British period also this went on in the form of education, deliverance of the downtrodden and "to proclaim liberty to the captives of sin."20 For instance, the British Resident and Diwan of Travancore Col. Munro (1812-14) extended several concessions including exemption of Christians and Christian converts from uliyam work in connection with temples and made Sunday a holiday to Christians.<sup>21</sup> Owing to historical reasons, prior to the nineteenth century the lower-caste women of Kerala, particularly of Travancore were not permitted to wear upper garments; using their influence in the government, the missionaries obtained that those who converted to Christianity would be exempted from the above primitive law.<sup>22</sup>

Along with the East India Company, several Protestant missionaries landed in India under the guise of Company chaplains. Simultaneously, with evangelical ends in view, they started a missionary organization in England.23 The centre of their discussion was "With what propriety, and in what mode, can a Mission be attempted to the Heathen from the Established Church?"24 The Charter Act of 1813 marks a turning point in missionary efforts, as it was a policy shift of the British East India Company, legitimizing English missionary activities in India. Thus, the British Protestant Missionaries got a free hand in the earmarked mission fields of India. Furthermore, the Charter Act of 1833 opened the doors of India to other European missionary groups: earlier, it was the exclusive privilege and right of the British missionaries, 25 but soon missionary groups occupied several large cities of India. 26, 27 During the 1880s, the Latin Catholic Christians of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar together had in their possession only forty churches, against 160 with the Syrian Catholics of the region; their populations were 90,000 and 2 lakhs respectively. The Basel missionaries started their activities in Malabar region in 1839, and by 1883 the Protestant population including children was only 2,632.<sup>28</sup>

#### Economy & literacy

The economic changes brought forth upon Great Britain through the Industrial Revolution forced them to create an extensive market and consumer base for their industrial production. Earlier, they counted India as only a centre of spice production; but the changed situation compelled them to draft new strategies: the East India Company began to see India as a potential market and to think about effecting socioreligious changes in the Indian subcontinent to make it fit for the consumption of British industrial products. They believed that familiarizing the natives to the European lifestyle would encourage them to consume more European goods.

At the same time, the evangelical needs of the missionaries brought letters and literature out of their ivory towers. Printing and its expansion through popular education, a colonial legacy, stopped the age-old isolation of literature in the hands of the elite class.31 In Kerala, making Malayalam prose a printable language was a priority of European missionaries. The press had a major cultural impact as a European mechanism of popular education, a colonial product for imperialist propaganda and a missionary device for spreading the Christian ethic of equality of men before God. Later, it helped the spread of egalitarian concepts and political consciousness amongst the masses. At the same time, the compulsions of the administrative organization and the need for cheaper clerks to man the lower treads of the Company administration forced them to frame a new educational policy for India.32 In short, they lifted their old policy of "subordinate isolation" and opened the new policy of "subordinate cooperation."

The missionary urge for Christianization of India was fermented in England long before the 1813 Charter Act. In 1793, William Carey reached Bengal at Serampore, with the missionary spirit but without proper permission from the Company. Originally a cobbler, he turned out to be a Baptist missionary and became instrumental to the general missionary spirit that prevailed over England during this period.<sup>33</sup> He laid the foundations of English education and the Bengali prose tradition. It was the commencement of Indian vernacular prose tradition, a necessary condition to the popularization of the Bible to the Hindu race. All intellectual movements in the subsequent period of Bengal were considerably influenced by Western ideas and the Serampore model. The process of evangelization of Bengal was not extinguished with William Carey but inspired several others like David Hare, Ward, Marshman, etc.34

In Kerala, particularly of Travancore, the missionaries spent their time and energy in establishing parochial schools in order to spread the gospels and popularize Western ways of life through the language of the common man to every nook and corner of the society.35 They hoped for the total conversion of the land into Western ways of life and for many souls to reach the Kingdom of God.36 Since the early agents of modern education were the Protestant Missionaries, literacy and evangelical missions were one and the same. To reflect the tenets of Christ in a more refined, impressive and simple vocabulary was the first object of the missionaries here. Thus the missionaries started the work of improving the prose literature of the vernacular.

#### The social field

The general social response to women education was poor. The society never felt it to be essential: people were satisfied with the traditional knowledge transmitted from mother to daughter, as that was sufficient to meet the household needs. Above all, the educated women had nothing to do with the general politico-socioeconomic conditions of the land.

On the other hand, the missionaries realized the need for

women's education.<sup>37</sup> In their attempt to restructure the traditional society, the education of women was seen as an essential condition. The opening of exclusive girls schools was the subsequent step taken up by the missionaries. In this field, the Church Missionary Society of England (CMS) was a pioneer.\* It targeted the upper class women, but as they feared religious instruction, this plan was a failure. Lower-class and Christian girls occupied the space of the schools<sup>38</sup>. In Travancore, which was an exclusive area of CMS missionary activity, the literacy rate of women was very high among the Pulaya community (an *avarna* section), as compared to the social status of Brahmin women.<sup>39</sup>

In 1822, Miss. M. A. Cooke started the first girls' school at Calcutta. In the following years, such schools were established in several other cities. In Kerala, the first of its kind was opened at Alleppey before 1825. Kottayam followed, where the Baker family started an exclusive school for women, which continues to this day as "Mrs. Baker Memorial Girls Higher Secondary School." There were missionary as well as colonial compulsions behind such ventures: through women's education the rulers were able to influence the kitchen as well as the kith and kin of the natives. The school syllabi contained not only textual knowledge but also elements of cooking, needlework, allopathic nursing care and family management. Thus, colonial modernity found an important entry into the households of native life.

The missionary enterprises moved in Kerala with allopathic nursing care, prayer, printing and schools. Even though the English medicine prior to World War II was inferior to the

<sup>\*</sup>This statement needs to be qualified: as elsewhere in India, native education was well organized in Kerala. For instance, the Collector of Malabar reported in 1823 a total of 14,153 students in native schools, out of whom 2,190 (or 15%) were girls. For more information on India's native educational system, see Dharampal's *The Beautiful Tree*, and, further below in this Part 3, "The education in India: Destruction and change under missionary and colonial influence." (Eds.)

native Ayurvedic system, it acquired acceptance amongst the natives. It was established through the school system which created an impression that native medicine and ways of life were false and primitive. Thus, the missionaries monopolized the native space of medicine and education. Therefore, the Christian society in India got an upper hand over the field of education and hospitals.

Another Christian attack over the native value systems was the promotion of cow slaughter. As mentioned earlier, the Portuguese and the Dutch entered into a treaty with native kings agreeing to abstain from the slaughtering of cows. But the British with their deliberate silence promoted cow slaughter among Muslims and Christians in order to shatter the age-old Hindu convictions.

The missionary enterprises considerably influenced the native architectural structural designs. Making use of the native knowledge of carpentry, the missionaries raised several buildings as "models" of a new pattern of construction along with the parish popularly known as "mission bungalows." They started industrial schools to introduce and popularize Western architectural models to the natives. But these models were designed for nuclear families, not for the traditional joint families. This gave way to the replacement of the traditional all-wood model of house construction to the new bungalows. While introducing the new house pattern, they succeeded in destroying the age-old family structure. In addition, they broke the monopoly of jati specialization in various architectural functions by introducing into the field various other non-conventional jatis through the newly started industrial schools. Above all, through the new house models suited to Western-Christian ways of life, they were able to convert natives into subjects of the Christian-Protestant discourse. 43

Another area that evolved under the missionary impact was the road network system. Before the arrival of the English Protestant missionaries, the natives used waterways for the transport of men and materials. No doubt Kerala was blessed

with navigable backwaters, forty-four westward-flowing rivers and innumerable small as well as big streams, which altogether catered to the transportation requirements of the natives. However, the missionaries required access to the hinterland, which, owing to its topography, was not connected with waterways. The chief reason was economic, the hinterland being good for the plantation industry. Another reason was that the entire land in the State was in the possession of upper caste (savarna) Hindus. New Christian converts from lower castes were in need of fresh lands and it was a necessary condition for their well-being.

Also, an alternative transport system was a necessary condition for the economic viability of hinterland farming. In the year 1342, the Arab traveller Ibn Batuta had rightly verified the absence of a road transport system in Malabar; goods were transported from the hinterland to the market places by head loads.44 Barbosa testified to the same state of affairs while narrating the occupation of the Ezhavas of Malabar; he remarked that in the absence of pack animals, the transportation of the agricultural products by head loads was the main occupation of the Ezhavas.45 All these factors compelled the English missionaries to popularize the road network. At the same time, the British introduced European models of carts.46 The Kerala aristocracy of the early decades of the last century used such luxury bullock carts, known as "villuvandi." The princely states of Kerala also followed the European model and constructed several long-distance roads like M. C. road, K. K road, etc.47 During the period 1780-92, Tippu Sultan also constructed a road network in the Malabar region to fulfil his ambitious designs of military expeditions into Kerala.

# The growth of Christianity in Kerala

Some mysteries of the Roman Catholic faith and the Jacobite Syrian Christian ritualistic faith were challenged by the Protestant ethics. The non-Protestant groups exercised the

Christian religion as *bhakti*, whereas the Protestant groups generally exercised it as ethical postulates. Amongst the non-Protestant groups, the Bible was inaccessible to the laity and they were content with religious bewilderment. With the help of printing, the English missionaries strived for the demystification of the Christian faith in Kerala, using the Jacobite Syrian Christians as a mediating group. The missionary endeavours anticipated a swift progress of the Protestant faith through print-based demystification and dissemination of Protestant ethics.<sup>48</sup>

In the demystification process of the Malayali Jacobite Christians, the English found obstacles like illiteracy and the absence of vernacular translation of the Bible. In 1818, Col. Munro found many of them leading immoral lives, turning the English policy towards correction, conversion and reform.<sup>49</sup> They were able to create a wave of tension amongst the native conservative Christians through the press and education, which resulted in the later break-up of the Jacobite Church of Kerala into several factions.

Nevertheless, an upsurge of resistance mounted from the native orthodoxy. Only non-Catholic Syrian Christians and lower-caste Hindus embraced the new schools to begin with; the other sections, including upper caste Hindus, Catholics and Muslims, kept themselves away<sup>50</sup>. But their resistance never grew beyond abstaining from the said progressive activities. New job opportunities in the government offices and the power and social status of the government employees shattered the base of their resistance. The middle-class leadership broke the resistance and joined with the systems of the day, which were moulded on the European way of life.

The anachronistic and rotten *Smrti* laws helped the widening of the Christian base in Kerala after the sixteenth century. In 1911, there were 526,911 Christians in Travancore. After two years this number was increased to 903,863 which is a clear evidence of mass conversion. Most of the Christian converts of the day were *avarna jatis* like *Pariah*, *Pulaya*,

Kurava, Mala-Araya, etc. Of the total nine lakh Christians of Travancore during 1911-12, 26.6% were from avarna jatis. <sup>51</sup> Protestantism has at present carved out another 3,118,574 C.S.I. Christians and 292,315 Salvation Army Christians from the Hindus of the four South Indian states. The aggressive evangelization programme opened by Francis Xavier some 460 years ago created a strong base for the Roman Catholic Church in India and now it functions with a population of 15,549,218. <sup>52</sup> The Christian population is now politically and economically a decisive force in Kerala.

#### IV

# Postcolonial Phase of Kerala's Christianity

The Christian churches, irrespective of their denominational difference stayed away from the freedom struggle and remained on the British side because the Church had been the chief beneficiary of the British presence in India for more than a century. Under their protection and guardianship the Church got remarkable economic as well as laity advantages here. That is why it feared a government by natives.

During World War II, the Church through its pulpits motivated Christian youth to sacrifice for the cause of the Empire. They regularly prayed for the victory of the King, and hated Gandhiji and the Congress. All these are considered as closed chapters of Indian history. Soon after Independence, the same Church succeeded in winning the faith and confidence of the government and the political parties. In fact, the governments, whether at the Centre or in the States, were dancing to the tune of the "pianos of the Church." Thus the history of Christianity in the postcolonial period is the story of the making and unmaking of governments.

The missionaries had been able to transplant a conceptual framework of modernity to a land where an archaic system

was in order. Now, they moved on with a new vision and mission. The Church's mission was always the spread of Christianity and its vision was in accordance with this goal. Earlier, they wanted to carve out a full Christian society from the Hindu fabric; their attempts having failed, they were in search of crypto-Christians. Crypto-Christians, although Hindu in names and costume, are not very different from the mainstream Christians in faith, rationality, ways of life and behaviour. Most of the prominent Marxists in Hindu names have shown their commitment to Christianity and Christian ways of life.

The international Christian community is looking for such 30,000,000 Christians from the Hindu social fabric by about 2025 CE.1 At present, the World Christian Encyclopaedia claims that India has 21,500,000 crypto-Christians. Similarly, they are waiting to spread their wings over the unorganized Hindu society and wish to carve out 68,200,000 true / direct Christians by 2025 CE. They claim that since 1900 onwards they were able to convert 438,285 Hindus per year to Christianity.2 According to the same encyclopaedia, "Christians and Muslims will probably both find room to grow in the mosaic of India's peoples so that by 2025 Christians account for 7.4% and Muslims 12.2% while Hindus decline to under 73% (down from 80% in 1900). With sustained growth over the next few decades Christianity could grow to near 10% of Indian population by AD 2025. ... Hindus will potentially decline as a percentage of India's population as other religions continue to win adherents over the next few decades."3 The determined attempts of organized religions can attain that target very easily; but their gains will ultimately result in the death of Hindu culture and civilization. History tells us the story of the decline of great civilizations like Greek and Rome; they lost their splendid culture under the onslaughts of Christianity.

The tendency towards temple destruction witnessed in the early phase of colonialism continued unabated during the

postcolonial period under the Church patronage. The first such instance took place in 1950, when the famous Sastha Temple at Sabarimala was set on fire. In 1983, the Christian Catholic lobby attempted to occupy the "Holy Garden" (sacred groves) of the same temple, on the lame excuse that this was the place where one of Thomas's eight churches was located. More than a thousand chapels were constructed throughout Kerala by intruding into P.W.D. [Public Works Department] roads and stands as "stumbling stones." In all the anti-Hindu ventures of the Church in independent India, its interests were well protected under the political umbrella.

Education is the contemporary Church's specific field of action; Kerala's education sector including professional education is to a significant extent under the control of the Church, an institutionalized dominance which may cause the marginalization of the Hindu students from the educational scenario in the near future. The temptation of Christ is now a blessing to the Church and they are "turning the stones into breads." It is interesting to see that Christians were against meaningful social control over the educational institutions in this State in the 1940s, when Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyyar was the Diwan of the princely state of Travancore — his efforts to provide free and compulsory primary education to all was incapacitated through the agitation of the Church — or again in the 1970s when Achuta Menon was Kerala's Chief Minister.

The Church through its wise and strategic move made its laity dominate the educationally and economically sound sections of society. That is why the Christian shares in the State's industry, agriculture and commerce are 35, 40 and 36 percent respectively. Behind this glittering performance of the 19 percent of the total population of Christians, one cannot deny the role of the Church as the prime motive force. These all are to a certain extent remarkable contributions of the Church in Kerala.

The Church of Kerala retains a darker side since the days of independence, i.e. its aggressive conversion projects. No

doubt this proselytism process is suicidal in so far as a civilization is concerned. Under the guise of charitable service, missionaries are encashing one's poverty and difficulties as their opportunity. It is a cruel practice and unethical too. Sr. Nirmala, the Mother Superior of the Missionaries of Charity, who pretends to respect the secularist values, openly declared in a secular social order that, "Christianity is the only religion which is totally true; the other religions are true only partially." The CMI, the monastic order of the Catholic Church, in their document relating to their education policy published in 1991 for private circulation, states that the ultimate aim of their education service in India is "to get the Hindu boys acquainted with the person of Jesus Christ and His Gospel." If this approach acquires pragmatism it will endanger our national freedom.

Another derogatory step that follows from the missionary interest in India is the recasting of traditional Hindu symbols to suit the Church's purpose of conversion. The pioneer in this line was Robert De Nobili, an early seventeenth-century missionary of India, who lived in the attire of a Hindu hermit and established a monastery in Madurai to convert Brahmins. He attempted to place Christianity within the Vedic tradition, which would appeal to the upper *jatis*. The Nobilian legacy still continues.<sup>9</sup>

Now the Church's priority changed and targeting subalterns became easy using the distorted symbols freely among the innocent. One such similar stand is the technique of substituting the term "Veda" for theological texts, which was initiated by nineteenth-century Bible-translating missionaries of India. Now the Christians and the Muslims identify their religious texts in vernacular by using the word "Veda," which in Sanskrit means knowledge and cannot be equated to the Bible or the Koran. The aim was to generate confusion in the ordinary Hindu minds between the *pramanas* / Vedas and the Bible.

The misuse of Hindu symbols takes various other forms like the distorted and disguised representation of the Rig Vedic narration of "Prajapati Yaga" as the "crucifixion." It is interesting to see the vulgar face of the Church in the postcolonial period. Another instance is the abortive attempt by Arulappa, a Catholic bishop, to hijack the Tamil Saint Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural for evangelical ends. He hired one Ganesh Ayyer to portray Thiruvalluvar as a Christian missionary and Thirukkural as a Christian text. Public protests forced the Church to abstain from the endeavour. 10 As part of the Church's proselytism endeavour, another Kerala Christian recently assumed the name of a Hindu sannyasin, Sachithanda Bharati, and claimed that he received "vow beard" from the Ramakrishna Mission president Swami Ranganathananda, who had recently attained Samadhi. The Ramakrishna Mission instantly rejected his claim. All these attempts reflect the covetous designs of the postcolonial Indian Church to establish Christendom over Hindustan.

In the British days, the Churches in Kerala were endowed with vast patches of royal / government lands. Because of these land grants, the Churches have been financially sound institutions. As a result, in all the main cities, the Churches are blessed with vast areas of landed property, schools, colleges and medical institutions. Now the Church is a wealthy force in India. But along with material progress, the Churches are choked with turbulences and litigations. The twenty-first century Church and its product, Christianity, are going to be subjected to some "hard testing."

#### 80 CB

#### References

#### I

 The date of the journey of Saint Thomas is not mentioned in this book. The book tells us that Thomas started his journey from Jerusalem, spent a few time in Syria and reached Afghanistan. Its ruler was Gondophernes. Thomas converted its ruler and his brother. Thereafter his journey was to Mazda where there he became martyr. See *The Saint Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of Kerala*, Vol. 2, Trissur, 1973, p. 3. Three fragments of the Gospel of Thomas in Greek, dated about 200 CE, were found in Oxyrhyncnus, Egypt, at about the turn of the last century and a full text in Coptic, dated 350 CE, were found near Nag Hammadi, Egypt. See "New Theories in Bible Research," John Dart, Kerala Express, dated 9th Kerala 1978.

- 2. Ward [Lieut.] and Connor, *The Survey of Travancore and Cochin States*, Trivandrum, 1863, p. 146.
- 3. P. Cheriyan, *The Malabar Syrians and The Church Missionary Society*, Kottayam, 1935, p. 39.
- 4. Joseph Pulikkunnel, *Identity of Nazarani Church of Kerala*, Edamattom Palai, 1997, p. 86.
- P. K. Balakrishnan, Kerala Vyavasthithiyum Kerala Caritravoum, Kerala, 1983, p. 345. Also see the letter of John Munroe, Resident of Travancore, from Quilon, on 30 March 1818, to Chief Secretary to the Government of Fort St. George, Madras. It is quoted from Document No. 4 of "A Collection of Important Documents Relating to Syrian Trusts," Kerala, 1937, pp. 19-23.
- 6. See discussions in *Church History of Travancore*, C. M. Augur, 1902, Kottayam, pp. 7, 8, 9.
- Margamkali was the most popular artistic performance prevalent among the Kananaya Syrian Christians of Kerala, Joseph Kulathramannil [Rev. Fr.] Cultural Heritage of Kananaya Syrian Christians, Youth Association, St. Marys Kananayaa Church, Sharjah, 2001, p. 57.
- 8. It is believed that a seventeenth-century Syrian Christian priest of central Travancore, Fr. Ittythomman, was the person behind the introduction of the new art form of *Margamkali*. The music of certain stanzas of the songs of this art form is set to Western style, a sufficient proof of its tradition. S. K. Vasanthan, op. cit., pp. 287-88.
- 9. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, Keralathintea Samskarika Charitram, Trivandrum, 1991, pp. 206-211.
- 10. P. K. Balakrishnan, op. cit., pp. 250-261, William Logan, Malabar Manuel, (mal trans.), Kozhikode, 1985, pp. 118 ff.
- 11. One group of aristocratic Christians who claims that they were migrated to this land from the Middle East in the fourth century CE.
- 12. Examined three Malayalam translations of the Copperplate Grant that circulate amongst the community and each giving a different name to a particular king is noticed. Above all some contradictions also notice. Nobody had seen the original document. Church says it was lost in the deluge of time. For further details, see N. K. Jose, Kerala Christava Tamra Sasanangal, pp. 38-42.

13. Ibid.

- 14. V. Nagam Aiya, Kerala State Manuel, Vol. III [rpt] Kerala, 1906, p. 139, S.K. Vasanthan, Kerala Charitra Nigandu, Kerala, 1983, p. 130 & K. T. Joseph, Kerala and their Ancient Documents, passim.
- First Copperplate Grant in Kollam Era is Mampalli Plate of Sree Vallabha Kotha in 974 CE. See P. K. Gopalakrishnan, Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram, Trivandrum, 1991, p. 242 & A. Sreedharamenon, Survey of Kerala History, Kottayam, 1970, pp. 41, 114, 160.
- 16. A. Sreedharamenon, Survey, op. cit., p. 395 & P. K. Balakrishnan, Jati Vyavasthithiyum Kerala Charitravoum, Kottayam, 1983, pp. 225-235.
- 17. A. Sreedharamenon, Survey, op. cit., p. 395.
- 18. François Pyrard de Laval, *The Voyage of François Pyrard de Laval*, trans. Albert Gray, Vol. I, London, 1601, pp. 386, 387 & P. K. Balakrishnan, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-280.
- 19. Francis Day, The Land of Perumals Cochin, its Past and Present, Madras, 1863, p. 323.
- 20. V. Balakrishnan, *History of Syrian Christians of Kerala*, Trissur, 1999, p. 85.
- 21. This Copperplate contains a land grant to Christian community of Quilon for the construction of Theresa Church. A. Sreedharamenon, op. cit., p. 100.
- 22. "Indicopleustes" means the man who sailed to India. See *Christian Topography of Cosmas*, ed. J. W. McCrindle, London, 1901 & Velayudhan Panikkassery, *Sancharikal Kanda Keralam*, Kottayam, 2001, pp. 53-57.
- 23. Brahmins 8 *jatis* and subordinate *jatis* 2, *jatis* associated with temple rituals –12, sudra *jatis* 18, degraded *jatis* –10, architects 6, lowest *jatis* attached to agriculture activities 8. See S. K. Vasanthan, op. cit., p. 177.
- 24. P. K. Balakrishnan, op. cit., p. 345.
- 25. Ramachandran Nair, Social Consequence of Agrarian Change, Jaipur, 1991, pp. 17, 18.
- See G. T. Mackenzie, Christianity in Kerala, p. 8., and Cosmas Indicopleustes's comments that Christians are not masters but slaves. Quoted from N. K. Jose, Adima Kerala Christavar, Vechoor, 1972, p. 127.

#### II

- H. C. Perumalil & E. R. Hambye, Christianity in India, Alleppey, 1972, Quoted from Kerala and Freedom Struggle. Article by Joseph Pulikkunnel.
- C. I. Issac, "Origin of Syrian Christians in Kerala Myth and Reality," Aseemaa Journal, Mangalore, Vol. I, No.4, p. 42.
- 3. S. K. Vasanthan, op. cit., pp. 334, 335.

- 4. Joseph Pulikkunnel quotes Fr. Koodapuzha, *Identity of Nazrani Church of Kerala*, Hosanna Mount, Kottayam, 1997, p. 17.
- 5. Ibid. p. 15.
- See The Canons of the Synod of Udyamperoor [Synod of Diamper 1599].
- 7. A. Sreedharamenon, op. cit., p. 230.
- 8. The Canons of the Synod of Udyamperoor [Synod of Diamper 1599], Canon XVIII.
- 9. P. Cheriyan, op. cit., pp. 101-115.
- 10. For further details see, Fr. Thomas Paremmakal, *Varthamanapus-thakam* [travelogue written in 1785], published by Prof. Mathew Ulakamthara, Kottayam, 2000, pp. 272 ff.
- 11. A Sreedharamenon, op. cit., pp. 230, 231.
- 12. It is because of the pull caused through the coir rope the Cross curved down. In Malayalam Coonan mean curved or bent. The meaning is "Oath of Bent Cross."
- 13. P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jati Vyavstituoum Kerala Charitravoum*, Kottayam, 1983, p. 345 ff.
- See Thazhakadu Church Inscription of Chera King Rajasimha [1028-1043 C.E]
- 15. Kanayalal M. Talreja, Holy Vedas and Holy Bible, New Delhi, 2000, p. 170.
- 16. Francis Xavier in a letter to the Church authorities in Portugal explains his joy and consolation while Hindu idols were destroyed. See V. Balakrishnan, op. cit., p. 105 & Kanayalal M. Talreja, op. cit., p. 18.
- 17. T. K. Velupillai, The Travancore State Manual, Vol. II, [1940] Trivandrum, rpt. 1996, pp. 174, 175 & A. Sreedharamenon, op. cit., pp. 228, 229.
- 18. "In 1544 the Portuguese entered into a treaty with Travancore. ... They on their side promised not to kill cows within the territory." T. K. Velupillai, op. cit., p. 175.
- 19. C. M. Augur, Church History of Travancore, Kottayam, 1902, p. 7, 8, 9.
- 20. T. M. Yesudasan, Dalit Svatvaum Adhikarathinte Prasnavum, 1997 Changanacherry, pp. 166, 167, 168.
- 21. A. Sreedharamenon, op. cit., pp. 231-233.
- 22. Ibid, p. 238.
- 23. Ibid, p. 258.
- 24. Abbé J. A. Dubois, Letters on the State of Christianity in India, first published 1823, rpt. 1995, New Delhi, pp. 74, 75.

#### Ш

1. Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy, Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism, Delhi, 1998, p. 34.

- 2. Ibid.
- 3. Rev. M. A. Sherring comments that the Syrians and the Catholic Syrians hardly allowed Protestantism to grow in peace. Rev. M. A. Sherring, History of Protestant Missions in India, 1706-1881, London, 1884, pp. 292-93.
- 4. "The missionaries especially the Bakers concentrated their work among the low casts and outcasts. A large number of people embraced Christianity. Those who joined the Christian church got freedom to travel along public roads, and to enter the premises of law courts, post offices, and schools. The freedom enjoyed by the converted Christian attracted others as well." See discussions, Prof. Arby Varghese, The Contributions of the Baker Family, Kottayam, 1999, p. 50.
- 5. Peter Van Der Veer, Imperial Encounters, religion and modernity in India and Britain, Delhi, 2001, p. 7
- 6. See Eugene Stock, Editorial Secretary, The History of Church Missionary Society, Vol. I Gilbert & Rivington, London, 1787, p. 3.
- 7. Missionaries functioned with clear principles, viz, Follow God's leading and look for success only from the Spirit; begin on a small scale; and mission should be founded on the Church principle, not the High church principle. Eugene Stock, op. cit., p. 2.
- 8. William Logan, Malabar, first published in 1887, rpt.1981, Trivandrum, p. 250.
- 9. "Mission institutions, for several generations, had been leavening the mind of the people with the knowledge of Christ and Christian ideals," T. Ambrose Jeya Sekaran, Educational Policies of Protestant Christian Missions in South India Till the End of Nineteenth Century, All India Association for Christian Higher Education, New Delhi, p. 53.
- 10. Peter Van Der Veer, op. cit., p. 98.
- 11. "Spreading the western values and passions, missionaries cultivated a generation within the social structure who could view their culture and tradition through the eyes of the Westerners." C. I. Issac, "The Press as a Site of Colonial Discourse - A Case Study on the Experience of Keralam," Journal of South Indian History, Calicut University Publication division, September 2003, pp. 37, 38.
- 12. Arby Varghese, op. cit., p. 57.
- 13. Peter Van Der Veer, op. cit., p. 6
- 14. B. L. Grover and S. Grover, Modern Indian History, New Delhi, 1994, p. 625.
- 15. Ashis Nandy, op. cit., p. 24 & "Western discourse on Eastern spirituality is reappropriated by the Indian religious movements of this period." See discussions in Peter Van Der Veer, op. cit., and pp. 69, 70.
- 16. Peter Van Der Veer, op. cit., p. 7.
- 17. The Rig Vedic message of "ekam sat vipra bahutavatanthi" is the

- centre of Hindu religious approach. Rig Veda, I.164. Also see, P. Parameswaran, *Hindutva Ideology Unique and Universal*, Chennai, 2000, p. 7.
- 18. "Education is an integral part of our mission to proclaim the Good News to every creature." See C.M.I Vision of Education (a policy statement published by Carmelite of Mary Immaculate) Cochin, 1991, pp. 1, 6.
- 19. Paul, the Apostle of Christ, The Acts of the Apostles, New Testament, XVII: 22.
- 20. Rev. Samuel Mateer, Native Life in Travancore, London, 1883, p. 425.
- 21. Ramachandran Nair, Social Consequence of Agrarian Change Jaipur, 1991, p. 22 & C. I. Issac, Printing Press in Colonial Travancore: Aspects of Subjectification (unpublished), 1993.
- 22. A. Sreedharamenon, op. cit., p. 379.
- 23. Arby Varghese, op. cit., p. 3.
- 24. Eugene Stock, op. cit., p. 2.
- 25. Missionary works started in Bengal since 1787. Ibid. p. 3.
- 26. Eugene Stock, op. cit., p. 17.
- 27. Jawaharlal Nehru observes the changes that have taken place in England in the economic field. Birth of industrial and agrarian revolutions totally changed the British economy, so Britain counted India not only as a source of spices. See *Discovery of India*, London, 1960, pp. 179, 302.
- 28. C. M. Augur, op. cit., pp. 7, 8, 9.
- 29. Ramachandran Nair, Social Consequence of Agrarian Change, Jaipur, 1991, p. 28.
- 30. R. C. Majumdar & others, An Advanced History of India, Madras, rpt. 1970, p. 810.
- 31. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, op. cit., p. 245 & R. Leeladevi, History of Malayalam Literature, Trivandrum, 1977, p. 62.
- 32. B. L. Grover and S. Grover, op. cit., p. 624
- 33. R. C. Majumdar & others, op. cit., pp. 810, 811.
- 34. Ibid & B. L. Grover and S. Grover, op. cit., p. 624.
- 35. Proceedings of Church Missionary Society, 1824-25, London, 1825, p. 132.
- 36. The annual general meeting of the Society of the Missionaries to Africa and the East, held on 4 June 1811 in London, talked about the need of influencing/converting the Princes of Hindustan. To this end they decided to publish the Sanskrit and Arabic versions of the Bible. See the Proceedings of the meeting Vol. III, London, 1812, p. 238.
- 37. "Unmarried female missionaries arrived in India in the 1840s and were assigned to work with women and children. These missionary

women, educated and eager to prove their worth, concentrated on converting adult married Indian women to Christianity. They gained entry to households as teachers where they read stories, taught needlework and attempted to bring their charges to Christ." See Geraldine Forbes, *The New Cambridge History of India - Women in Modern India*, New York, 1999, p. 37.

- 38. "The religious instruction deterred prestigious families while pupils from lower classes or Christian families were lured to the school by gifts of clothing and other items." Ibid., p. 39.
- 39. C. I. Issac, Printing Press in Colonial Travancore: Aspects of Subjectification, School of Social Sciences, M.G. University, 1993 [unpublished].
- 40. A. Sreedharamenon, A Survey of Kerala History, SPCS, Kottayam, 1970, p. 380.
- 41. "The first quarter of the nineteenth century saw the inception of CMS College, the brain child of Col. John Munro, the British Resident and Dewan of Travancore. At his request the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society came to Travancore. ... Education was the chief means employed by the missionaries to carry out this task of reformation," quoted from the Manual and Calendar 1999-2000 of CMS College, Kottayam, p. 1.
- 42. Arby Varghese, op. cit., p. 31.
- 43. Subjectification refers to the process of the construction of the subjects through myriad of discursive strategies. Discourses are perhaps best understood as practices that systematically form the objects of which speaks. See Madan Sarup, An Introductory Guide to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, 1992, p. 64.
- 44. A. Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, Madras Govt. Press, 1908, p. 264.
- 45. Duarto Barbosa, *The Book of Duarto Barbosa* (trans. by Mansel Longworth) Dames, London, 1918, p. 60.
- 46. Before 1850 in Kerala there were no roads other than narrow tracks of short distance. Most of the early roads of Travancore were constructed only later. In 1750 King Marthanda Verma had made an attempt in this direction. See P. K. Balakrishnan, *Jati Vyavastitioum Kerala Charitravoum*, NBS, Kottayam, 1983, pp. 16, 128, 170.
- 47. During the reign of Ayilam Tirunal (1860-80) in Travancore a number of roads were constructed. A. Sreedharamenon, op. cit., pp. 331-32.
- 48. From the letter of Col. Munro, Resident of Travancore to Chief Secretary of East India Company at Fort St. George, Madras on the state of Christianity in Travancore. From: Quilon dated 30.03.1818, See Document No. 4, A Collection of Important Documents Relating to Syrian Trust, Travancore and Cochin Mission (private circulation),

Kottayam, 1937, pp. 19-23. & P. Cherian, op. cit., p. 369.

- 49. Col. Munro, op. cit., pp. 19-23 & P. Cherian, op. cit., pp. 65, 68, 72, 73.
- 50. Proceedings of Church Missionary Society, London, 1825-26, p. 101.
- 51. Paul Chirakkarode, Dalit Christavar Keralathil, Thiruvella, 2000, p. 99.
- 52. Jose Nedumpara, Indian Christian Directory, op. cit.

#### IV

- 1. World Christian Encyclopaedia, OUP, New York, 2001 Vol. I, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 359-370.
- 2. Ibid.
- 3. Ibid., p. 366.
- 4. This expression is used by St. Paul (see his Letter to the Romans, 9:32). Here the Church did not put its faith in the sayings of Christ, but in their own works.
- 5. Now the Church is turning the stones into big buildings and starting educational institutions as well as hospitals and minting money. See the temptation of the Christ in Luke 4:3.
- 6. "Travancore Government Gazette Extraordinary dated September 12, 1945 announcing their decision to assume direct responsibility for imparting primary education throughout the State. ... The Christian managements, particularly Catholic educational agencies, took up cudgels against the new educational policy." See more discussions in A. Sreedharamenon, Triumph and Tragedy in Travancore, Kottayam, 2001, pp. 61, 62, 63, 64.
- 7. See Mathrubhumi Daily, 28 September 2002.
- 8. CMI Vision of Education, Prior General's House, Kochi, 1991.
- 9. Titus George, "Why must it be Vedic identity?", The New Indian Express, Kochi, 25 September 2000.
- For a detailed discussion, see Ishwar Sharan, The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1991.
- 11. See the discussions in survey of Kerala History regarding the land grants and financial assistance to the Christian missionaries of Travancore by its ruler Gouri Parvati Bai and its Diwan Col. Munroe. A. Sreedharamenon, Survey of Kerala History, op. cit., p. 329.

# ANTECEDENTS OF THE GOA INQUISITION

#### Radha Rajan\*

This article is largely based on A. K. Priolkar's book, The Goa Inquisition,\*\* one of the most comprehensive studies on the topic available in English.

The Inquisition was established in India in 1560. Its activities ceased for a while in 1774 but it was revived five years later in 1778 during the reign of Maria, Queen of Portugal, and was finally abolished only in 1812.

#### Antecedents in Spain

William Prescott explained:

Acts of intolerance are to be discerned from the earliest period in which Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire; but they do not seem to have flowed from any systematized plan of persecution, until the papal authority had swollen to a considerable height. The Popes, who claimed the spiritual allegiance of all Christendom, regarded heresy as treason against themselves and as such, deserving of all the penalties which sovereigns have uniformly visited on this unpardonable offence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Radha Rajan has been actively defending Hindu causes for many years; known for her numerous and incisive writings, she is the coordinator for the public opinion forum VIGIL in Chennai. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup>A. K. Priolkar, The Goa Inquisition: Being a Quatercentenary Commemoration Study of the Inquisition in India (Bombay: 1961, republished New Delhi: Voice of India, 1991).

... As a result of the active cooperation of Church and State, a ruthless machinery for the systematic persecution of persons considered heretics was erected in the thirteenth century. This formed the background for the establishment in Spain of what is known as the Spanish or Modern Inquisition during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, in the fifteenth century.

At that time in Spain, the Jewish community occupied the foremost positions in many fields — trade, scholarship, and politics. This provoked the envy of their Christian brethren and interested parties succeeded, by spreading malicious rumours and calumnies against this unfortunate race, in inciting the crowds to indiscriminate massacre and pillage. Prescott averred: "In this crisis, the only remedy left to the Jews was a real or feigned conversion to Christianity."

Thus, many Jews at this time embraced Christianity as the only way to save their life and property. But though Christian in outward appearance and practice, they retained a fierce loyalty to their natal faith, and practised in secret the rites and usages associated with their traditions. Knowledge of this led to loud and persistent demands for the establishment of the Inquisition to remedy this state of affairs. The reactions of the royal couple (Ferdinand and Isabella) to these repeated importunities varied. Prescott, for instance, wrote:

Ferdinand listened with complacency to a scheme which promised an ample source of revenue in the confiscations it involved; but it was not so easy to vanquish Isabella's aversion to measures repugnant to the natural benevolence and magnanimity of her character. ... But not long after, she consented to solicit from the pope a bull [a papal edict] for introduction of the holy office into Castile [Spain's central region]. Sixtus IV who at that time filled the pontifical chair, easily discerning the sources of wealth\* and influence which the measure opened to

<sup>\*</sup>Through the confiscation of Jewish wealth. The Church enriched itself enormously by confiscating the estates and assets of "heretics." (Eds.)

the Court of Rome, readily complied with the petition of the Sovereigns, and expedited a bull dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 1478, authorising them to appoint two or three ecclesiastics, inquisitors for the detection and suppression of heresy throughout their dominions.

Tomas de Torquemada, a Dominican monk who was Isabella's confessor since her childhood, played a central role in the early history of the Spanish Inquisition. Pope Sixtus IV appointed Torquemada as the Inquisitor General of Castile and Aragon and assigned to him the task of preparing a new constitution of the Inquisition. This code came into effect in October 1484, and the Inquisition soon became the most dreaded and hated tribunal in the Western Christian world.<sup>2</sup>

Under Torquemada's supervision, the Spanish Inquisition condemned 8,800 "New Christians" (Jews forcibly converted or who converted out of dread of the Inquisition) to be burnt at the stake and 96,504 others to various other penalties. These are the figures given by Don Juan Antonio Llorente, Secretary of the Inquisition at Madrid during 1790-92, who by virtue of this position had access to all departments of the Inquisition. After the Inquisition had been abolished in 1808, he examined the records of its working in the city and in other provinces. The activities of the Inquisition were a dread mystery carefully hidden under a veil of secrecy and Llorente is said to be the only contemporary writer who dared to lift the veil.

## The Portuguese Inquisition

The Jewish community in Spain was given four months to leave the country, and in despair turned to Portugal for help, not only on account of the geographical contiguity of the two countries, but also because of its intimate ties with the Jewish community in Portugal, who till that time continued to enjoy the protection of law. ... The Jewish community in Portugal, as a result of superior intelligence, habits of hard work and thrift, had carved for themselves a position of considerable

influence and power in that country. However the distinction between the followers of Roman Catholicism and those of a religion which was merely tolerated was made clear beyond doubt in certain humiliating disabilities from which the latter suffered. Their synagogues could not hold real estate in the manner in which the Christian Churches did. In addition to general imposts, all Jews had to pay a special poll tax (this formed the precedent for a similar tax imposed on Hindus in Goa during the early Portuguese regime). The Jews were forced to live in segregation in separate parts of towns called Judarias. They were not allowed to employ Christians as servants. They could not wear silk garments or jewels and could not ride horses.

King João II of Portugal in spite of the harsh treatment which the Spanish Jews met at his hands, was firmly opposed to the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal. He was fully alive to the varied benefits accruing to the country from the intelligence and wealth of the Jewish community and would not countenance any move to banish them. But he died in 1495 and was succeeded by his nephew Manoel. King Manoel developed a passionate attachment for Isabella, the eldest daughter of the monarchs of Spain. She had a fanatical hatred of Jews and laid down the condition that if King Manoel desired to marry her, he must follow in the footsteps of her parents and "purify" Portugal of the Jews. One of the conditions imposed on King Manoel was that he must expel from Portugal the Jews who had sought asylum from the Spanish Inquisition. The second condition was that Portugal must also expel its own Jews forthwith from that country.

To meet Isabella's wishes, in 1496 King Manoel issued an order that Jews who had not converted to Christianity should leave the country within 10 months. Failure to comply would entail the death penalty and loss of all property which would then be handed over to the informer. It was found that a large majority of the Jews preferred exile to conversion to Christianity. Another order was therefore issued to the effect that

children below 14 years of age should be forcibly taken away from all Jews leaving the country and handed over to persons who would bring them up in the Christian faith.

This caused tremendous consternation among the Jews. Those members of the community whose hearts were more hardened or spirits more ardent resisted to the point of madness, preferring to tear their children to pieces, or strangle them or drown them in wells rather than hand them over to the officers of the King. (It is recorded that, later, similar scenes were enacted in Goa when a similar order directed against the Hindus was promulgated there during the Portuguese regime.) The scope of this inhuman order was later enlarged to include children up to the age of 20.

Many in Portugal looked with favour upon the working of the Inquisition in the neighbouring country of Spain and conditions in Portugal were now such that they felt keenly the need for similar institutions in Portugal. Soon thereafter, João III [or John III] succeeded to the throne of Portugal after the death of King Manoel. He had a fanatical disposition and nursed a profound hatred for the Jewish race. The anti-Jewish faction received powerful support from Queen Catherine who was the sister of Charles V, King of Spain. She was brought up from childhood to view the Inquisition as an essential institution for the maintenance of the true faith. Through her, the influence of the Dominican friars in the Portuguese Court also grew.

In 1531, the King issued instructions to his ambassador at the Papal Court in Rome to move secretly to secure a papal bull which would serve as the basis for the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal. Although the bull was issued on 17 December 1531, the Inquisition itself started functioning only 10 years later, in October 1541. The Portuguese historian Oliveira Martins left a vivid account of the working of that dread tribunal:

Its processes infringed all the elementary rules of justice and good sense. The accusers made use of

sons as witnesses to give evidence against their parents, and parents against their children. The accused could not communicate with his advocates nor did he know who his accusers were. The charge was always applauded and spying considered to be a virtue. The spies ingratiated themselves with families as medical men, confessors, intimate friends and advisers to worm out secrets and report them. There was neither appeal against the sentence nor revision.<sup>3</sup>

The Inquisition's inhuman carnage continued for over 230 years. The famous liberal minister of Portugal, Marquez de Pombal, as a result of a measure of reform passed in 1774, rendered the Inquisition practically defunct and it was finally abolished in 1820. Until 1732 the Portuguese Inquisition alone had condemned 23,000 persons to various forms of punishment and burnt at the stake 1,454 persons. There is no record of the number of persons who lost their lives as a result of tortures to which they were subjected during the trials.

#### The Goa Inquisition

After the Portuguese established colonies in India many Jews from Portugal had settled down there with the object of taking advantage of the new opportunities for trade and commerce. Later, when the Portuguese Jews were forcibly converted to Christianity and their lives became increasingly precarious due to organised persecution at the hands of Church and State, many sought refuge in the Indian colonies in quest of greater tolerance and security. Unfortunately, the Portuguese Christians and Christian missionaries who set up shop in India hounded them here as well.

It was Francis Xavier who first demanded the setting up of the Inquisition in Goa. In a letter addressed from Amboina [today Ambon, in Indonesia] to King João III, on 16 May 1545, he wrote: The second necessity for the Christians is that Your Majesty establish the Holy Inquisition because there are many who live according to the Jewish law and according to the Mahomedan sect, without any fear of God or shame of the world. ... Your Majesty should provide such necessary things for your loyal and faithful subjects in India.<sup>4</sup>

King João III ignored Francis Xavier's exhortations, and the Inquisition was not established in Goa during his reign. However similar demands continued to be addressed to the authorities in Portugal and Rome from different quarters. Soon after the death of João III in 1557, the crown went to his three-year-old grandson. As a result, Cardinal Henrique assumed regency power and sent to Goa as Inquisitor Alexei Diaz Falcão, who by the end of the year "founded a tribunal which in time earned a sinister renown as the most pitiless in Christendom," in the words of the historian of the Inquisition H. C. Lea.

Jesuit historian Fr. Francisco de Souza described an incident which served as the immediate cause for the introduction of the Inquisition in Goa.

Whilst in the island of Goa, heated efforts were made to destroy Hinduism, Father Provincial Gonsalvo da Silveira and Bishop Belchior Carneiro were moving about in Cochin persecuting the New Christians. These priests came to know how in that city were living some descendants of the Israelite people, rich and possessing much, but infected with Judaism. ...

These Jews who had come to India from Spain and Portugal either for trade or as refugees continued to observe Judaic customs and traditions in spite of having converted to Christianity.

The priests could not tolerate such outrages in a city of Catholics, and they applied to the Vicar Pero

Gonsalves, a great friend of St. Francis Xavier, on the grounds that there was no bishop in India nor the tribunal of the Holy Office, whom might proceed against these atrocious blasphemies. ...

Soon twenty or so of those "New Christians" from among the rich of Cochin were arrested and taken to Goa. Many other New Christians were arrested in Goa and they were all sent to Portugal to face the Inquisition, where some were burnt at the stake and others awarded inhuman punishments.

Fr. de Souza continued:

And with this, His Highness, having understood what was happening in India took the opportunity to send here the Holy Office, which with the passage of time found so many guilty and burnt and awarded other punishments to so many of these New Christians, ... thereby cleansing India of so much corruption and wickedness.<sup>6</sup>

In 1863, Goan historian J. C. Barreto Miranda painted this picture of the Inquisition of Goa:

The cruelties which in the name of the "religion of peace and love," this tribunal practised in Europe, was carried to even greater excesses in India, where the Inquisitors surrounded by luxuries which could stand comparison with the regal magnificence of the great potentates of Asia, saw with pride the Archbishop as well as the viceroy submitted to their power. Every word of theirs was a sentence of death and at their slightest nod were moved to terror the vast populations spread over the Asiatic regions, whose lives fluctuated in their hands and who, on the most frivolous pretext, could be clapped for all time in the deepest dungeons or strangled or offered as food for the flames of the pyre.

#### Apologies?

A few years ago, the Pope apologized for the atrocities of the Church against persons of the Abrahamic faiths — Jews, Muslims, and women who were accused of practising witchcraft and burnt at the stake. Significantly, he did not apologize for the crimes by the Church against peoples of non-Abrahamic faiths, such as the Native Americans, Blacks who were forcibly brought to the Americas and the Caribbean as slaves, the natives of Australia, New Zealand and the innumerable tribes and indigenous peoples of islands like the Bahamas, Hawaii, Tahiti etc. Most significantly, he did not apologize to the peoples of Asia and Africa for forcible conversions, much less the colonizing of their countries, which had the blessings of the Church as it was seen as a new measure not only for harvesting more souls but also for replenishing the coffers of the Church. Indeed, in the context of his mea culpa, the Pope may legitimately be asked to explain his intention to plant the cross in Asia in the twenty-first century.

#### 80 03

#### References

1. William Prescott, History of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic of Spain, Vol. I, London 1838, p. 345.

2. See H. C. Lea's famous History of the Inquisition of Spain, 4 vols., New York, 1906-07.

3. J. P. Oliveira Martins, Historia de Portugal, vol. 2, Lisbon, 1886, pp. 33-34.

4. Silva Rego, Documentação para a Historia das Missões do Padroada Portugues do Oriente, vol. III, Lisboa, 1950, p. 351.

5. H. C. Lea, op. cit., pp. 260-61.

6. Fr. Francisco de Souza, Oriento Conquistado a Jesus Christo, part I (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Bombay, 1881), p. 82.

7. J. C. Barreto Miranda, Quadros Historicos de Goa, Cadernete I, Margão 1863, p. 145.

### The Destruction of Hindu Culture in Goa

João III (John III), king of Portugal from 1521 to 1557, was nicknamed "John the Pious" for his zeal in spreading Christianity, his support of the new Jesuit order (the "Society of Jesus") and of the Inquisition in Portugal. He was anxious to see Christianity spread to Portugal's colonies, including in India, and issued to his Viceroy Joao de Castro the following "pious" commands:

The great concernment which lies upon Christian princes to look to matters of Faith and to employ their forces for its preservation makes me advise you how sensible I am that not only in many parts of India under our subjection but in our city of Goa, idols are worshipped, places in which our Faith may be more reasonably expected to flourish; and being well informed with how much liberty they celebrated heathenish festivals We command you to discover by diligent officers all the idols and to demolish and break them up in pieces where they are found, proclaiming severe punishments against any one who shall dare to work, cast, make in sculpture, engrave, paint or bring to light any figure of an idol in metal, brass, wood, plaster or any other matter, or bring them from other places; and against who publicly or privately celebrate any of their sports, keep by them any heathenish frankincense or assist and hide the Brahmins, the sworn enemies of the Christian profession. . . . It is our pleasure that you punish them with that severity of the law without admitting any appeal or dispensation in the least.\*

<sup>\*</sup> Jacinto Frere Andrade, Life of Dom Joao Casho (tr. into English by Sir Peter Wyche), 1664, p. 45 (quoted by K. M. Panikkar, Malabar and the Portuguese, 1929, pp. 186-87).

John III's "pleasure" was scrupulously carried out, and in fact hundreds of Hindu temples were demolished in and around Goa, and in other Portuguese territories around that time. Writes historian T. R. de Souza:

At least from 1540 onwards, and in the island of Goa before that year, all the Hindu idols had been annihilated or had disappeared, all the temples had been destroyed and their sites and building materials were in most cases utilized to erect new Christian Churches and chapels. Various viceregal and Church council decrees banished the Hindu priests from the Portuguese territories; the public practice of Hindu rites including marriage rites, was banned; the state took upon itself the task of bringing up Hindu orphan children; the Hindus were denied certain employments, while the Christians were preferred; it was ensured that the Hindus would not harass those who became Christians, and on the contrary, the Hindus were obliged to assemble periodically in churches to listen to preaching or to the refutation of their religion.

Destruction apart, all temple properties were confiscated:

... The government transferred to the Church and religious orders the properties and other sources of revenue that had belonged to the Hindu temples that had been demolished or to the temple servants who had been converted or banished. Entire villages were taken over at times for being considered rebellious and handed over with all their revenues to the Jesuits. In the villages that had submitted themselves, at times en masse, to being converted, the religious orders promoted competition to build bigger and bigger churches and more chapels than their neighbouring villages. Such a competition, drawing funds and diverting labour, from other important welfare works

of the village, was decisively bringing the village economy in Goa into bankruptcy.\*

Countless edicts\*\* were issued to persecute the Hindus, restrain them from following their customs, or confiscate their properties on the slightest pretexts. They could no longer sing or play music at their festivals, could not distribute betel leaves, could not hold "banquets," could not erect pandals, could not clean a house with cow dung after someone's death, could not hold ceremonies "in memory of their deceased relations," could not celebrate harvests, could not bathe before entering the kitchen to cook food, could not fast on the eleventh day of the new moon or full moon or on any other sacred day, could not wear the *dhoti* or the *choli* in public, could not keep coconut trees or tulasi in their gardens, and could not do a host of other things they had been doing for centuries. Some edicts made it compulsory for Hindus to "come with their families to places assigned for the purpose to listen to the preaching of the Holy Gospel"; "Brahmins and other infidels" could not hold any office, were taxed heavily. Hindu orphans were "to be taken immediately and handed over to the College of St. Paul of the Society of Jesus of the said city of Goa, for being baptized, educated and indoctrinated by the Fathers ...," which order soon extended to those who simply lived with their grandparents, or occasionally to just any child; some of the "orphans" were returned on payment of what can only be called a ransom. Other methods of extortion abounded.

<sup>\*</sup> Excerpted from Dr. Teotonio R. de Souza's "The Portuguese in Asia and their Church Patronage," in *Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity*, ed. M. D. David (Bombay: 1988). The author is a Christian Goan and a reputed historian of Goa, author of numerous papers and several books in English and Portuguese.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Many examples are listed in chapters 6, 7 & 8 of *The Goa Inquisition* by A. K. Priolkar (Bombay: 1961, republished New Delhi: Voice of India, 1991). The next few quotations are from those chapters.

Harassment and depredation apart, the object of those abhorrent "laws" was to force all "infidels" to convert. T. R. de Souza notes:

A particularly grave abuse was practised in Goa in the form of 'mass baptism' and what went before it. The practice was begun by the Jesuits and was later initiated by the Franciscans also. The Jesuits staged an annual mass baptism on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25), and in order to secure as many neophytes as possible, a few days before the ceremony the Jesuits would go through the streets of the Hindu quarter in pairs, accompanied by their Negro slaves, whom they would urge to seize the Hindus. When the blacks caught up a fugitive, they would smear his lips with a piece of beef, making him an 'untouchable' among his people. Conversion to Christianity was then his only option.\*

Worse were the innumerable pretexts under which a Hindu could be arrested by the Inquisition: any accusation of blasphemy against Christianity, any denunciation for an alleged act contrary to one of the myriad edicts was enough. Apart from Christian converts denouncing Hindus, Hindus were encouraged to denounce each other; the latter practice reached such proportions that a few Hindus mustered enough courage to address to the King a piteous petition, explaining that such arrests "lead to the death of a majority of the prisoners, as according to their custom they cannot eat food unless it is cooked by persons of their own caste. ...," and begging the Holy Office not to "take cognisance of any crime by denunciation and proof furnished by Hindus alone. ..."

In 1729, Viceroy João Saldanha da Gama doubted (in Priolkar's words) "whether the Inquisition could legitimately

<sup>\*</sup> Teotonio R. de Souza "The Portuguese in Asia and their Church Patronage," op. cit.

take cognisance of the actions of those who were never Catholics," and reported that "the effect of the harassment by the Inquisition was a large-scale migration of the Hindus to the neighbouring territories, and the consequent ruin of commerce within the Portuguese territories. . . . " Migration of those who had been lucky enough to survive, that is. As for those who succumbed, they suffered a second death in the oblivion that later historians im.posed on them.

CB

#### POUNCING ON GOA

#### Alfredo de Mello\*

... Already in 1545 Francis Xavier wrote to Rome from Goa, asking for the Inquisition to be installed immediately. King João III [or John III] under the influx of the Dominicans, considered the Inquisitor General to be worth more than royalty itself, and surrendered his powers totally to the Company of Jesus, granting the widest possible powers to the Jesuits, who were able even to alter the civil laws. Even the Viceroys of India were afraid of the Inquisition.

The Christian religion on account of its mystical passivity leads to a state of apathy. It was a regression to medieval apathy, extinguishing all individualism, by the contemplation of Death and the terrors of Hell, by frequent confessions.

In another chapter dealing with the nefarious, fiendish, lustful, corrupt religious orders which pounced on Goa for the purpose of destroying paganism and introducing the true religion of Christ (poor Jesus, if He only knew what was done in His name!), I have dwelt briefly on the Inquisition, which was introduced in 1560 and lasted until the year 1812, that is a span of 252 years, during which period it held its sway with a power that Stalin and other tyrants would have liked to hold. Stalin was a tyrant, murderer, but at least he was not a hypocrite.

Xavier did not see his wish fulfilled, but in the year 1560 the first Inquisitors Aleixo Dias Falcão and Francisco Marques,

<sup>\*</sup>Prof. Alfredo F. de Mello is a Goan-born businessman-cum-scholar settled in Uruguay, author of *The Real Colon* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1999) and *Memoirs of Goa* (2003). The present text is excerpted from this second title's chapter 21 (as reproduced on several websites, with minor editing here, and added subsections; the title of the article is ours). (Eds.)

secular canonists, established the Inquisition in Goa. This Inquisition was definitely abolished in 1812 — when the British Forces were occupying Goa — and the files were kept first in Goa, and later sent on to Lisbon.

The "Holy Office," as it called itself, settled in the palace of the Sabaio Adil Khan. From 1510 onwards this palace in Old Goa had become the palace of the Governors and Viceroys who lived there until 1554, when Viceroy D. Pedro de Mascarenhas, being 70 years old, and very frail, was unwilling to climb the stairs to two stories. Consequently this vacated palace was occupied by the Inquisition six years later. The palace was modified with a chapel, halls of entrance, the hall of audiences, house of *despacho*, residence of the first Inquisitor, house of secret, house of doctrine, any number of cells, and other special ones: of secret, of penitence; of perpetual confinement; of the tortures, all this within a great building which had an outer wall of seven spans (1.5 m).

The Palace of the Inquisition was pointed out in awe by Goans, who called it *Orlem Goro* or Big House, with two hundred cells. The Inquisition in Goa, on account of its rigors, was reputed to be the worst of the existing inquisitions in the Catholic orb of the five parts of the world, as felt unanimously by national and foreign writers.

The inquisition, this tribunal of fire, thrown on the surface of the globe for the scourge of humanity, this horrible institution, which will eternally cover with shame its authors, fixed its brutal domicile in the fertile plains of the Hindustan. On seeing the monster everyone fled and disappeared, Moguls, Arabs, Persians, Armenians, and Jews. The Indians even, more tolerant and pacific, were astounded to see the God of Christianity more cruel than that of Mohammed, deserted the territory of the Portuguese and went to the lands of the Muslims, with whom time had made peaceful living possible, in spite of the fact that they (Indians) had received from

them enormous and incalculable evils. In this fashion the fields and cities became deserted as are today Diu and Goa.<sup>1</sup>

Alexandre Herculano, a famous writer of the nineteenth century,\* mentioned in his "Fragment about the Inquisition":

... The terrors inflicted on pregnant women made them abort. ... Neither the beauty or decorousness of the flower of youth, nor the old age, so worthy of compassion in a woman, exempted the weaker sex from the brutal ferocity of the supposed defenders of the religion. ... There were days when seven or eight were submitted to torture. These scenes were reserved for the Inquisitors after dinner. It was a postprandial entertainment. Many a time during those acts, the Inquisitors compared notes in the appreciation of the beauty of the human form. While the unlucky damsel twisted in the intolerable pains of torture, or fainted in the intensity of the agony, one Inquisitor applauded the angelic touches of her face, another the brightness of her eyes, another, the voluptuous contours of her breast, another the shape of her hands. In this conjuncture, men of blood transformed themselves into real artists.

... The savant Ferdinand Denis wrote: "Many voyagers painted with great energy the torments which the Inquisition of Goa inflicted on its prisoners, but the most minute report, without contradiction and most moderate in all respects was that of a French doctor called Dellon, who wrote a special treatise on this tribunal, of which he was one of the victims."

<sup>\*</sup>Alexandre Herculano de Carvalho e Araujo (1810-1877) was a leading Portuguese historian, author of a four-volume *History of Portugal* as well as a *History of the Origin and Establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal* (English tr. 1926). We do not know whether the passage quoted here refers to Portugal or to Goa. (Eds.)

Indeed Dellon, ten years after he escaped from his punishment in the galleys in Lisbon, wrote his famous *Relation de l'inquisition de Goa* ["Account of the Goa Inquisition"], printed in Holland in 1687. The acquisition of Dellon's book was most difficult for more than two hundred years, because not only it was antique but prohibited. Only Mr. Cunha Rivara, in the late nineteenth century, on the way to serve as Secretary to the Governor in Goa, was able to get a copy from the curator of the public library in Lisbon, Joao Jose Barbosa Marreca.

The words *Auto da fé* reverberated throughout Goa, reminiscent of the furies of Hell, which concept, incidentally, does not exist in the Hindu pantheon. On April 1, 1650, for instance, four people were burnt to death; the next *auto da fé* was on December 14, 1653, when eighteen were put to the flames, accused of the crime of heresy. And from April 8, 1666, until the end of 1679 — during which period Dellon was tried — there were eight *auto da fé*, in which 1208 victims were sentenced. In November 22, 1711, another *auto da fé* took place involving forty-one persons. Another milestone was on December 20, 1736, when the Inquisition burnt an entire family of Raaim, Salcete, destroying their house, putting salt on their land, and placing a stone *padrao* [a large stone cross], which existed in the place at least till 1866.

#### Inside the "Palace"

Let us dwell on Dellon's experience. He was a 24-year-old Roman Catholic Frenchman, living in Daman — a Portuguese colony north of Bombay — and practiced medicine. The apparent reasons for his imprisonment by order of the Inquisition of Goa were the ill-conceived jealousy of the Governor of Daman, Manoel Furtado de Mendonça, and that of a priest, secretary of the Holy Office, who harbored a secret passion for the same lady who lived in a house in front of the priest's lodgings.

The jealousy of the Captain was motivated by my frequent and innocent visits that I made to a lady that he coveted; I was equally greatly loved by her, a circumstance which until then I ignored; and as he judged things by light appearances, he learnt soon that I was his most beloved rival. An ecclesiastic, a native, secretary of the Holy Office, who lived in front of the house of the said lady, also nurtured a strong passion, like that of the captain-governor, citing her infamously even in the tribunal of penitence, as was revealed to me by herself. This priest, observing my visits, had become as jealous as the captain, and even though until then he was one of my best friends, grateful for the important services rendered by me, nevertheless he made a common cause with captain Manoel Furtado to provoke my ruin.

Both these rivals joined forces, by claiming heresies on the part of Dellon for not kissing the small alms boxes, on which were painted the image of the Holy Virgin or some saint as was the custom of the local Catholics. Also the fact that he did not wear rosaries around the neck. And the final heresy was a friendly conversation that he had had with the priest, in which he questioned the infallibility of the Inquisitors, who were, after all, men. To which the priest had replied: "Beware of saying such a thing. If the Inquisitors in the tribunal are infallible, it is because the Holy Spirit presides always on their decisions." Captain Furtado being the cousin of the Viceroy Luis de Mendonça Furtado, went to Goa to denounce Dellon, who was imprisoned by order of the Inquisitors on August 24, 1673, to his great surprise.

*Prisao* is the generic name for prison. *Carcere* was the prison of the Inquisition. Dellon was dumped into a fetid cell, provided with a hole for relieving himself. But it overflowed, and there were faeces all over, an abominable smell, practically no light, save for slits on the wall, well above the reach

of one's hands. The first Inquisitor was Francisco Delgado e Mattos, a secular priest of around 40 years; the second Inquisitor was always a Dominican. All belongings were confiscated and inventoried, and the prisoners were told that these would be returned after the sentence; in reality the belongings and properties of the jailed were auctioned off at the Rua Direita, Goa's main thoroughfare, and the Inquisitors got hold of the monies and properties at half their value.

The house of the Inquisition, which the Portuguese called Santa Casa, was situated in one of the sides of the great plaza in front of the Cathedral which is dedicated to Saint Catherine. ... Each prisoner was given an earthen bowl with water for ablutions; another cleaner bowl with water for drinking, and a jug of earthenware to keep the water cool. He was given also a broom, in order to keep his cell clean (?); a mat to put on the bench where he was supposed to sleep; a big basin, which was changed every four days, and another basin to cover the former, and served to keep the trash after cleaning the cell. ... Those who died in the jail were buried inside the building, and as they were going to be judged, the bodies were exhumed, and the bones were kept to be burnt on the next auto da fé.

The prisoners were not given any books to read, nor light except the daylight which filtered through the slits on the wall above. All the cells had two benches for sleeping and whenever necessary, two prisoners were kept in the same cell. Besides the mat, the European prisoners were given a quilt, which served as mattress, or as cover against the mosquitoes.

#### Inquisitional procedures

As mentioned before, in Goa there were two Inquisitors, the first called *inquisidor-mor*, who is always a secular priest, while the second belonged to the order of the Dominicans. They had a great number of officers, who were called deputies of the Holy Office. They were obliged to be present in the

judgment of the accused, in the examinations and tortures, but were never summoned to attend the Tribunal unless they were expressly called for by the Inquisitors. Other employees called qualifiers of the Holy Office had to examine the books, and the suspicions regarding any heresy contrary to the purity of the faith. The Holy Office also had a promoter, a procurator, and lawyers who were assigned to the prisoners who sought them. These lawyers, far from defending their assigned prisoners, served only to denounce their most recondite sentiments giving them false illusions. There were other officers, called familiares do Santo Oficio [servants of the Holy Office], who were really justice officers of this tribunal. Persons of all conditions were anxious to be admitted to such posts; even the dukes and princes sought them, such was the esteem of the posts. Their job was to accuse the prisoner. They were not salaried, but were distinguished with a gold medal with the inscriptions of the Holy Office. Besides all these employees, there were also secretaries and other who had the titles of meirinhos, Alcaide (justice of the peace) or Carcereiro (jailer) and guards, to keep an eye on the prisoners and to give them their meals.

Since the prisoners were separated from one another, and only rarely were two lodged in the same cell, four guards were enough to keep a watch on 200 prisoners. There was an eerie, perpetual silence, and those who complained, or even prayed to God loudly, ran the risk of being whipped by the guards.

Seven witnesses were required to condemn a person. But the witnesses were never brought face to face with the hapless accused. The Inquisition admitted the testimony of all kinds of people, even of those who were interested in the utter condemnation of the accused (as was the case of Dellon). Among the seven witnesses was included the victim himself, who under torture had admitted the heresies that he had (not) committed.

Many a time all the seven witnesses were worth nothing because they became supposed accomplices, who were really

innocent of the crime which they purportedly committed, because the Inquisition in their fiendish manner made them really criminal, obliging them with tortures of fire to accuse an innocent victim in order to save his own life.

The crimes were of different kinds: blasphemies, impiety, sodomy, necromancy and witchcraft. For example if any of the newly converted took part of the "superstitious assemblies" (Jewish Sabbaths) or former idolatries (Hindu gods) practiced of yore, that was enough to cause a victim to be burnt at the stake. If he confessed at the last moment, and was truly sorry, he would be condemned to the garrote\* for capital punishment, and then burnt. Otherwise he would be burnt alive.

This was not the end. After confessing to the crimes he was accused of by his witnesses, the Inquisitors twisted around, forcing the victim to accuse the witnesses; for instance, "If you have been in the assemblies of the Sabbath, and your accusers were also there, as is probable, then to convince us of your sincere repentance, it is necessary that you indicate to us not only the names of your accuser, but of all who associated with you in such assemblies" — a catch-22 situation.

What a dilemma! If the victim did not know the names of his accusers, how could this innocent imagine who they were? Therefore, in order to avoid being burnt by fire, the victim had to follow such a line of argument: "My accusers must be surely some of my relatives, friends, neighbors, or finally some New Christians, whose houses I happen to visit: because the old Christians are never censored, nor suspected of Jewishness, and maybe these individuals are so unlucky as I; it is therefore necessary that I accuse them all." And since he could not by any means find the six or seven persons who had accused him, he had no choice than to declare a greater number of innocents, who had never thought of him in any

<sup>\*</sup>A method of execution long practised in Spain, with an iron collar tightened about the neck by a screw. (Eds.)

way whatsoever, thus eternally feeding the Holy Office's eager headhunting... and money-grabbing! All the belongings and properties of the accused were confiscated, be it of those condemned to death, or of those who escaped from it by confessing, because in both cases they were reputed as guilty; and as the Inquisition wanted the fortune rather than the life of the prisoner, according to their laws, they cynically only delivered to the secular arm (for carrying out the burnings) the relapsed who refused to confess the accusations made against them.

#### The victims

Out of one hundred people condemned to the stake as Jews, maybe only four had continued with Jewish mores, whilst all the others cried out loud until their last pitiful gasp that they were Christians, and that they had been Christians all their lives, and adored Jesus Christ as their only and real God. Neither the tears nor the protests of those wretched (as wretched were those who suffered for not confessing a lie) were of any avail. Whereas on the other hand a great number of witnesses, for fear of being burnt to death, were obliged to accuse those innocents.

If Christians taken to be secretly Jews were unjustly delivered to the executioners, it was no less unjust to see how native Christians were accused of magic and witchcraft, and as such condemned to fire. Any practice, feast or celebration of the pagans was considered as witchcraft. Furthermore, the newly converted gentiles who had passed the greater part of their lives as pagans, and those who lived in Goa as slaves or servants who with the intention of improving their status in the house of their lords had changed their religion to Catholicism, these ignorant and rude men might merit at most some whipping, and not death by fire. It did not matter: they were all convicted and suffered death.

The Inquisition did not punish only the Christians accused

of having trespassed, but also Muslims, Hindus, and other foreigners of different religions: they were accused of practising their religion in Portuguese lands, subject to the Portuguese crown, where Catholicism was the Law. Many were condemned to whipping and work in the galleys, and this fear of being condemned to the stake often made these gentiles and Muslims embrace Christianity as a mode of escape. Therefore, instead of being useful for the Christian faith, the Inquisition only served to shoo away the people from the Catholic church, and create a horror of it.

In spite of Dellon's tearful requests to appear before the judges, he was kept in prison, and only obtained the first audience on January 31, 1674. After hearing Dellon, the judge dismissed him and recommended that "he should take good counsel to accuse himself spontaneously," and exhorted him on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ that "he should declare the rest of his accusations, in order to experience the goodness and mercy, which the tribunal used with those who are truly repentant of their sins, by means of a sincere confession, and not forced."

There followed the second and third audiences, weeks apart. No luck; he was always sent back to jail, because he had not confessed all his sins. Dellon tried to commit suicide with bloodletting: he feigned to be sick, and the Pundit ordered some bloodletting, but Dellon afterwards, when alone, untied the bandages and let his blood ooze, losing about 18 ounces, for five consecutive days. The jailers found out and in order not to allow him to commit suicide and become mad, they sent another prisoner to his cell to keep him company for some months. He was taken to the Inquisitor who reprehended him most severely and ordered that the cloth bindings be protected by iron hoops, so that Dellon could not move his arms.

After eighteen months in jail, Dellon was called for a fourth audience, and several times more; the august Inquisitors had him returned to his cell, because he had not confessed all his sins. Every morning of November and December he could hear the cries of the tortured.

Three kinds of torture were practiced: 1) the rope or the pulley, 2) water and 3) fire. The torture by rope consisted in the arms being tied at the back and the victim being raised by a pulley, left hanging for some time, then dropped down to half a foot above the floor, and then raised again. These continued up-and-down movements dislocated the joints and made the prisoner emit horrible cries of pain. This torture went on for an hour.

The torture by water was as follows: the victim was made to lie across an iron bar, and was forced to imbibe water without stopping. The iron bar broke the vertebrae and caused horrible pains, whereas the water treatment provoked vomits and asphyxia.

The torture by fire was definitely the worst: the victim was hung above a fire, which warmed the soles of the feet, and the jailers rubbed bacon and other combustible materials on the feet. The feet were burned until the victim confessed. These last two tortures lasted for about an hour, sometimes more. The house of torments was a subterranean grotto, so that other might not hear the cries of the wretched. Many a time, the victims died under torture; their bodies were interred within the compound, and the bones were later exhumed for the *auto da fé*, and burnt in public.\*

#### The auto da fé

Finally on the evening of Saturday 11 January 1676, Dellon

<sup>\*</sup>Only a fraction of the bones were thus treated; most remained secretly buried. When the "palace" of the Inquisition was finally demolished in 1829, "the labourers who were employed in its removal [of the debris] discovered a subterraneous staircase, and human bones buried under a thick piece of lead of the shape of a whale or a boat." J. N. Fonseca, An Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa (Bombay: 1878), p. 216. (Eds.)

learnt that the auto da fé would take place on the following day, because he was ordered to wear a black robe with white stripes, and at two in the morning he was taken to a gallery where almost two hundred victims were standing, reclining against the wall. About a dozen were whites, and all the rest natives. In another gallery, invisible to the condemned men, there were women assembled, dressed similarly. Then, big scapulars of yellow cloth with crosses of St. Andrew painted in front and in the back were brought to be worn by some of the unfortunate lined up in the dark gallery. These scapulars were called Sambenitos: they were for those condemned for having committed crimes against the faith of Jesus Christ, be it for being Jews, Muslims, magicians, or heretics who had been formerly Catholics. Those who were branded as convicts and persisted in denying the facts of which they were accused, or who had relapsed, were obliged to wear another scapular which was called Samarra, a brown cloth on which the portrait of the victim was painted above flames, and surrounded by demons. Below this portrait were written down the name of the condemned and his crimes. But for those who accused themselves after the sentence was pronounced, and who had not relapsed, a different Samarra was given: in these brown vests the flames were facing downwards, which is called fogo revolto [reversed fire].

The Sambenitos were distributed to about twenty of the natives accused of necromancy and to one Portuguese accused of the same crime and who was also a New Christian. After the distribution of the Sambenitos, five pointed bonnets or mitres of cardboard, all painted with demons and flames, and the word feiticeiro (sorcerer) were brought and placed on the heads of the persons accused of necromancy. They were kept standing up all night, till at last the sun rose and the bell of the cathedral started tolling. This was the signal for the population of Goa to wake up, and come to witness the august ceremony of the auto da fé which was considered as a triumph of the Holy Office.



Condemned prisoners of the Inquisition, Goa, taken in a procession at the Campo Sancto Lazaro, made to wear scapulars and mitres. One is seen being burnt (centre left), while another (centre) is about to be burnt.

By daylight, each convict was ordered to march alongside a godfather, one of the officials assigned to each victim. It was a great honor to be appointed godfather for these ceremonies. Dellon's godfather was the Admiral of the Armada of the Indies. The procession was led through the long streets of the city, so that the multitudes could watch the ugly pageant. Finally, covered with shame and confusion, tired of the long march, the condemned reached the church of St. Francis, which was decked with great pomp and circumstance. The altar was covered with black cloth on which stood

six silver candleholders. On both sides of the altar there were two kinds of thrones: the right side for the Inquisitor and his councilors, and the left side for the Viceroy and his court. The convicts and godfathers were seated on benches. Next, four man-sized statues were brought, accompanied by four men who carried boxes full of bones of the victims who had died by tortures: these statues, wearing the *Samarra* and representing the dead victims would be tried too.

Once the sermon was concluded, two officials went up to the pulpit to read publicly the proceedings of all the guilty, and to declare the sentences upon them. Dellon was declared excommunicated, his belongings confiscated, exiled from India, and condemned to serve for five years in the galleys in Portugal. He had to comply with other penitences imposed by the Inquisitors. . . .

Those condemned to be burnt at the stake were delivered to the secular arm, to which the Inquisition begged to use clemency and mercy with these wretched, and to impose the death penalty without effusion of blood. What a great goodness of the Inquisition to intercede in this fashion on behalf of the condemned! Burning them was not like chopping off their heads with "effusion of blood"!

#### Dellon's judgment

On January 23, 1676, Dellon and others whose lives had been spared, were called again by the Inquisition; kissing the ground, on their bended knees, with hands on the Gospels, they had to promise to keep an inviolate secret in all matters that had passed during their seclusion, or what they had learned during their imprisonment. On January 27, Dellon's chains were taken away and he sailed to Brazil where he was kept in prison; finally eleven months later he arrived in Lisbon, where he was sent to the galleys. At that time, there being no galleys in Lisbon he was sent to a prison called "galé" where he was chained again, tied to the foot of a Portuguese

who had escaped from the flames because of his confession on the day before he was scheduled to be burnt at the stake. They were obliged to forced labor in the arsenals in Lisbon. All were shaved, head and beard, once a month.

Being aware that he was condemned to five years of hardships, Dellon inquired if there was any Frenchman in Lisbon who could be of help. It just happened that a French doctor was the bedside doctor of the queen of Portugal who was none other than Maria Francisca Isabel of Savoy, who had been married to Afonso VI, the king who had been declared imbecile and impotent, and exiled to the Azores; this marriage was annulled and the French princess was now married to prince D. Pedro, regent of the Reign. It was through this helping hand, and even though the Inquisition in Lisbon dared not contradict the sentences of the Goa Inquisition, that Dellon managed to become free eventually and ordered to leave for France on 30 June 1677. The French cabbala which ruled Portugal in those days helped him recover his freedom and travel to France: he had been a victim of the Inquisition for four years.

In his book, Dellon narrates the cases of other worthy prisoners, who had no luck, because the Inquisitor's argument was: "We will rather have you burnt as guilty, than to make believe that we held you prisoner as innocent."

The Inquisition was proclaimed extinct in 1774 by Marquis of Pombal, but it was reinstated... by the pious Queen Maria I in 1778. The Napoleonic wars, the occupation of Portugal by the French, and of Goa by the British, had their salutary effects: the Inquisition was finally banished in Goa in 1812 by royal decree. The enormous Palace, which had been the Palace of Adil Khan, and had housed the Inquisition for 252 years was demolished in 1829, and there are no traces of it except for some mounds of bricks and stones.

Reverend Dr. Claude Buchanan, vice president of the Fort William College in Calcutta, dedicated some pages in his work *Christian Researches in India*, London 1811, to the visit

he paid to Goa in the year 1808, when the British were occupying Goa, and he carried along Dellon's book in his pocket.\*

Goa will go down in history as having had the worst Inquisition, as testified by the Frenchman François Pyrard de Laval; he lived in Goa from June 1608 until January 1610, and in his book *Voyage to Eastern India* states that the Inquisition of Goa was more severe than that of Portugal because very frequently it burnt Jews, whom the Portuguese called "New Christians."

Another author, in the nineteenth century, Joao Felix Pereira, concurred with Pyrard's statement and wrote:

The Inquisition of Goa, distinguished itself on account of the greater rigors than those of the tribunals of the metropolis; thousands of victims died at the stake in flames; and when these bloody executions brought fears of a seditious movement, the Viceroys and governors, who did not enjoy the power of force openly, employed the dagger of the assassins and poison.<sup>3</sup>

... J.C. Barreto Miranda in his Quadros históricos de Goa, states:

The cruelties, which in the name of the religion of peace and love, practiced this tribunal in Europe, increased in the greatest excesses in India, where the Inquisitors, living in a severe luxury, which was not below in any way to the royal magnificence of the greatest potentates of Asia, saw with pride how the Archbishop and Viceroy were submitted to their whims and power.<sup>4</sup>

And as the last straw, it will be enough to have an idea of the omnipotence of the Inquisition in Goa, by reading their

<sup>\*</sup>See extracts from Buchanan's important testimony in the next article. (Eds.)

Edict of 14 April 1736, which is a real Manifesto against the religious practices and customs of the Indians.\*

#### 80 CB

#### References

- 1. Memoirs of Judges Magalhães and Lousada (Nova Goa: 1859), Vol. 2, Annaes Marítimos e Coloniais, p. 59.
- 2. Ferdinand Denis, Portugal, p. 252.
- 3. Joao Felix Pereira, *Historia de Portugal*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 235.
- 4. J.C. Barreto Miranda, *Quadros Históricos de Goa*, 1863, Cad 2, Quad IX, page 147.

<sup>\*</sup>See the preceding box, "The Destruction of Hindu Culture in Goa," with some extracts of this edict. (Eds.)

# "BEHOLD ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE HOLY INQUISITION"

#### Rev. Dr. Claudius Buchanan

The author (1766-1815) was a chaplain and at the time the vice principal of the college of Fort William in Bengal. Like his friend William Carey, he was an active missionary and believed that "the time is come for disseminating the knowledge of Christianity in the heathen world," as he said in a 1809 sermon, a belief he associated, like many of his contemporaries, with Britain's civilizing mission and an utter contempt for Hinduism. His major work, Christian Researches in Asia (With Notices of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages), appeared in 1811. In it, he narrated his visit to Goa in January 1808, when the British occupied the area, and his attempt to elicit from the Inquisitors information on the state of the Inquisition there.

Buchanan carried with him the book of Dr. Dellon, a French physician who had been imprisoned by the Inquisition in 1674 for two years under false charges (see the previous article). After great suffering and many tribulations, Dellon had managed to return to France, where he broke the solemn promise of silence he had made to his judges, and wrote his well-known Account of the Inquisition at Goa (first published in 1687 in Holland). Although right up to the twentieth century several Christian scholars clumsily tried to argue that Dellon's account was a forgery, it has been verified from several independent sources, and as we see in Buchanan's own account, implicitly confirmed by the Inquisitors themselves. It is in fact their reaction and stubborn stonewalling which make Buchanan's own testimony important. It was certainly

instrumental in convincing the British powers to have the Goa Inquisition stopped, which finally took place four years after his visit, in 1812.

... He [Buchanan\*] had learnt from every quarter, that this tribunal, formerly so well known for its frequent burnings, was still in operation, though under some restriction as to the publicity of its proceedings; and that its power extended to the extreme boundary of Hindostan. That, in the present civilized state of Christian nations in Europe, an Inquisition should exist at all under their authority, appeared strange; but that a Papal tribunal of this character should exist under the implied toleration and countenance of the British Government; that Christians, being subjects of the British Empire, and inhabiting the British territories, should be amenable to its power and jurisdiction, was a statement which seemed to be scarcely credible; but if true, a fact which demanded the most public and solemn representation. ...

But what a contrast to all this grandeur of the [Goan] Churches is the worship offered within! I have been present at the service in one or other of the Chapels every day since I arrived; and I seldom see a single worshipper, but the ecclesiastics. Two rows of native Priests, kneeling in order before the altar, clothed in coarse black garments, of sickly appearance, and vacant countenance perform here, from day to day, their laborious masses, seemingly unconscious of any other duty or obligation of life. ...

In the library of the chief Inquisitor I saw a register, containing the present establishment of the Inquisition at Goa, and the names of all the officers. On my asking the chief Inquisitor whether the establishment was extensive as formerly, he said it was nearly the same. ... In the evening he

<sup>\*</sup>The first paragraph is part of a general notice which introduced Buchanan's account and spelt out his objectives in Goa, hence the use of the third person. (Eds.)

came in, as usual, to pass an hour in my apartment. After some conversation I took the pen in my hand to write a few notes in my Journal: and, as if to amuse him, while I was writing, I took up Dellon's book, which was lying with some others on the table, and handing it across to him, asked him whether he had ever seen it. It was in the French Language, which he understood well. "Relation de l'Inquisition de Goa," pronounced he, with a slow articulate voice. He had never seen it before, and began to read with eagerness. He had not proceeded far, before he betrayed evident symptoms of uneasiness. He turned hastily to the middle of the book, and then to the end, and then ran over the table of contents at the beginning, as if to ascertain the full extent of the evil. He then composed himself to read, while I continued to write. He turned over the pages with rapidity, and when he came to a certain place, he exclaimed, in the broad Italian accent, "Mendacium, Mendacium" ["Lie, lie."]. I requested he would mark those passages which were untrue, and we should discuss them afterwards, for that I had other books on the subject. "Other books," said he, and he looked with an enquiring eye on those on the table. He continued reading till it was time to retire to rest and then begged to take the book with him.

After breakfast we resumed the subject of the Inquisition. The Inquisitor admitted that Dellon's descriptions of the dungeons, of the torture, of the mode of trial, and of the Auto da Fé were, in general, just; but he said the writer judged untruly of the motives of the Inquisitors, and very uncharitably of the character of the Holy Church;\* and I admitted that, under the pressure of his peculiar suffering, this might possibly be the case. The Inquisitor was now anxious to know to what extent Dellon's book had been circulated in Europe. I

<sup>\*</sup>The usual excuse of Christian apologists: the Holy Inquisition, they tell us, had the noblest motives, was concerned only with the purity of the Faith, and was often quite compassionate. A pity we do not have testimonies by its victims in praise of such an angelic institution. (Eds.)

told him that Picart had published to the world extracts from it, in his celebrated work called *Religious Ceremonies* together with plates of the system of torture and burnings at the Auto da Fé.\* I added that it was now generally believed in Europe that these enormities no longer existed, and that the Inquisition itself has been totally suppressed; but that I was concerned to find that this was not the case. He now began a grave narration to shew [= show] that the Inquisition had undergone a change in some respects, and that its terrors were mitigated.

I had already discovered, from written or printed documents, that the Inquisition of Goa was suppressed by Royal Edict in the year 1775, and established again in 1779. The Franciscan Father before mentioned, witnessed the annual Auto da Fé, from 1770 to 1775. "It was the humanity, and tender mercy of a good King," said the old Father, "which abolished the Inquisition." But immediately on his death, the power of the Priests acquired the ascendant, under the Queen Dowager, and the Tribunal was re-established, after a bloodless interval of five years. It has continued in operation ever since. It was restored in 1779, subject to certain restrictions, the chief of which are the two following, "That a greater number of witnesses should be required to convict a criminal than were before necessary"; and, "that the Auto da Fé should not be held publicly as before but that the sentences of the Tribunal should be executed privately, within the walls of the Inquisition."

In this particular, the constitution of the new Inquisition is more reprehensible than that of the old one; for, as the old Father expressed it, "Nunc sigillum non revelat Inquisitio." — Formerly the friends of those unfortunate persons who were thrown into its prison, had the melancholy satisfaction of

<sup>\*</sup>Bernard Picart was one of the finest engravers of the eighteenth century; his profusely illustrated *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Several Nations of the Known World* referred to here by Buchanan was published in several volumes in 1731. (Eds.)

seeing them once a year walking in the procession of the Auto da Fé; or if they were condemned to die, they witnessed their death and mourned for the dead. But now they have no means of learning for years whether they be dead or alive. The policy of this new mode of concealment appears to be this, to preserve the power of the Inquisition, and at the same time to lessen the public odium of its proceedings, in the presence of British dominion and civilization. I asked the Father his opinion concerning the nature and frequency of the punishments within the walls. He said he possessed no certain means of giving a satisfactory answer; that every thing transacted there was declared to be "sacrum et secretum" [sacred and secret]. But this he knew to be true, that there were constantly captives in the dungeons; that some of them are liberated after long confinement, but that they never speak afterwards of what passed within the place. He added that, of all the persons he had known, who had been liberated, he never knew one who did not carry about with him what might be called, "the mark of the Inquisition;" that is to say, who did not shew in the solemnity of his countenance, or in his peculiar demeanour, or his terror of the Priests, that he had been in that dreadful place.

The chief argument of the Inquisitor to prove the melioration [improvement] of the Inquisition was the superior humanity of the Inquisitors. I remarked that I did not doubt the humanity of the existing officers; but what availed humanity in an Inquisitor? he must pronounce sentence according to the Laws of the Tribunal, which are notorious enough; and a relapsed Heretic must be burned in the flames, or confined for life in a dungeon, whether the Inquisitor be humane or not. "But, if," said I, "you would satisfy my mind completely on this subject, shew me the Inquisition." He said it was not permitted to any person to see the Inquisition. I observed that mine might be considered as a peculiar case; that the character of the Inquisition, and the expediency of its longer continuance had been called in question; that I had myself written

on the civilization of India, and might possibly publish something more upon that subject, and that it could not be expected that I should pass over the Inquisition without notice, knowing that I did of its proceedings; at the same time I should not wish to state a single fact without his authority, or at least his admission of its truth. I added that he himself had been pleased to communicate with me very fully on the subject, and that in all our discussions we had both been actuated, I hoped, by a good purpose. The countenance of the Inquisitor evidently altered on receiving this intimation, nor did it ever after wholly regain its wonted frankness and placidity. After some hesitation, however, he said he would take me with him to the Inquisition the next day. . . .

He led me first to the Great Hall of the Inquisition. We were met at the door by a number of well-dressed persons, who, I afterwards understood, were the familiars, and attendants of the Holy Office. They bowed very low to the Inquisitor, and looked with surprise at me. The Great Hall is the place in which the prisoners are marshalled for the procession of the Auto da Fé. At the procession described by Dellon, in which himself walked barefoot, clothed with the painted garment, there were upwards of one hundred and fifty prisoners. I traversed this hall for some time, with a slow step, reflecting on its former scenes, the Inquisitor walking by my side in silence. I thought of the fate of the multitude of my fellow-creatures who had passed through this place, condemned by a tribunal of their fellow-sinners, their bodies devoted to the flames, and their souls to perdition. And I could not help saying to him, "Would not the Holy Church wish, in her mercy, to have those souls back again, that she might allow them a little further probation?" The Inquisitor answered nothing, but beckoned me to go with him to a door at one end of the hall. By this door he conducted me to some small rooms, and thence, to the spacious apartments of the chief Inquisitor. Having surveyed these he brought me back again to the Great Hall; and I thought he seemed now desirous that I should depart. "Now,

Father," said I, "lead me to the dungeons below; I want to see the captives." —"No" said he, "that cannot be." ... I now began to suspect that it had been in the mind of the Inquisitor, from the beginning, to shew me only a certain part of the Inquisition, in the hope of satisfying my inquiries in a general way. I urged him with earnestness, but he steadily resisted, and seemed to be offended or rather agitated by my importunity. I intimed to him plainly, that the only way to do justice as to his own assertions and arguments, regarding the present state of the Inquisition, was to shew me the prisons and the captives. I should then describe only what I saw; but now the subject was left in awful obscurity. ... "Lead me down," said I, "to the inner building and let me pass through the two hundred dungeons, ten feet square, described by your former captives. Let me count the number of your present captives, and converse with them. I want to see if there be any subjects of the British Government, to whom we owe protection. I want to ask how long they have been here, how long it is since they beheld the light of the sun, and whether they ever expect to see it again. Shew me the Chamber of Torture; and declare that modes of execution, or of punishment, are now practised within the walls of the Inquisition, in lieu of the public Auto da Fé. If, after all that has passed, Father, you resist this reasonable request, I shall be justified in believing that you are afraid of exposing the real state of the Inquisition in India." To these observations the Inquisitor made no reply; but seemed impatient that I should withdraw. "My good Father," said I, "I am about to take my leave of you, and to thank you for your hospitable intentions, ... and I wish always to preserve on my mind a favourable sentiment of your kindness and candour. You cannot, you say, shew me the captives and tile dungeons; be pleased then merely to answer this question; for I shall believe your word: ... 'How many prisoners are there now below, in the cells of the Inquisition?" "The Inquisitor replied, "That is a question which I cannot answer." On his pronouncing these words,

I retired hastily towards the door, and wished him farewell. We shook hands with as much cordiality as we could at the moment assume; and both of us, I believe, were sorry that our parting took place with a clouded countenance.

From the Inquisition I went to the place of burning in the *Campo Santo Lazaro*, on the river side, where the victims were brought to the stake at the Auto da Fé. It is close to the palace, that the Vice-Roy and his Court may witness the execution; for it has ever been the policy of the Inquisition to make these spiritual executions appear to be the executions of the State.

An old Priest accompanied me, who pointed out the place, and described the scene. As I passed over this melancholy plain, I thought on the difference between the pure and benign doctrine, which was first preached to India in the Apostolic age, and that bloody code, which, after a long night of darkness, was announced to it under the same name! And I pondered on the mysterious dispensation, which permitted the ministers of the Inquisition with their racks and flames, to visit these lands, before the heralds of the Gospel of Peace. But the most painful reflection was, that this tribunal should yet exist, unawed by the vicinity of British humanity and dominion. I was not satisfied with what I had seen or said at the Inquisition, and I determined to go back again. The Inquisitors were now sitting on the tribunal, and I had some excuse for returning. ...

As I walked up the Hall, I saw a poor woman sitting by herself, on a bench by the wall, apparently in a disconsolate state of mind. She clasped her hands as I passed, and gave me a look expressive of her distress. This sight chilled my spirits. The familiars told me she was waiting there to be called up before the tribunal of the Inquisition. While I was asking question concerning her crime, the second Inquisitor came out in evident trepidation, and was about to complain of the intrusion, when I informed him I had come back for the letter from the Chief Inquisitor. He said it should be sent

after me to Goa; and he conducted me with a quick step towards the door. As we passed the poor woman I pointed to her, and said to him with some emphasis, "Behold, Father, another victim of the Holy Inquisition!" He answered nothing. When we arrived at the head of the great stair, he bowed, and I took my last leave of Josephus a Doloribus, without uttering a word. ...

It will indeed be an important and happy day to the earth, when this final erasure [of the Inquisition from the face of the earth] shall take place; but the period of such an event is nearer, we apprehend, in Europe and America, than it is in Asia; and its termination in Asia depends as much on Great Britain as on Portugal. And shall not Great Britain do her part to hasten this desirable time! Do we wait, as if to see whether the power of Infidelity will abolish the other Inquisitions of the earth? Shall not we, in the meanwhile attempt to do something, on Christian principles, for the honour of God and of humanity? Do we dread even to express a sentiment on the subject in our legislative Assemblies, or to notice it in our Treaties? It is surely our duty to declare our wishes, at least, for the abolition of these inhuman tribunals (since we take an active part in promoting the welfare of other nations), and to deliver our testimony against them in the presence of Europe.

80 03

# REPRESSION OF BUDDHISM IN SRI LANKA BY THE PORTUGUESE

(1505-1658)

#### Senaka Weeraratna\*

When militant Christianity entered India, its target was Hinduism; in Sri Lanka, it was Buddhism. The following article outlines the history of the ensuing clash, which often parallels the sequence of events in India.

All three western colonial powers — the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British — that governed Sri Lanka in varying degrees during the period 1505-1948, had as the cornerstone of their imperial policy the conversion of the Sinhala Buddhists and the Tamil Hindus into Christianity. This enterprise had the blessings of the highest strata of people of the imperial countries including the Crown, the State and the Church. The avowed political objective in converting the colonized was to transfer their allegiance from the local sovereign to the foreign sovereign, and alienate the converted from identification with their traditional religion, culture, language and sense of self-determination. This diabolical plan invariably required the use of manipulative methods of conversion e.g. force, fraud and allurement, and the repression of indigenous religions i.e. Buddhism and Hinduism, by both overt and covert means.

<sup>\*</sup>Senaka Weeraratna is a Sri Lankan attorney and the Honorary Secretary of the German Dharmaduta Society; he has written extensively on Buddhist issues, such as the preservation of Buddhism, animal welfare, etc. This article is dated 12 June 2005. (Apart from minor editing, we have omitted a few sections of the article. Eds.)

As this subject is vast and given the constraints of space this paper will examine as illustrative of Western colonial policy on religion, some aspects of the measures adopted during the first phase of Western Colonialism in Sri Lanka i.e. the Portuguese period (1505-1658), to forbid the practice of Buddhism in territories under Portuguese control. This paper will make reference to repressive proclamations, decrees and laws enacted by the Portuguese Crown, the Viceroy at Goa, the Ecclesiastical Council at Goa, the Kingdom of Kotte ruled by Don Juan Dharmapala under the protection of the Portuguese, and the Portuguese authorities in Sri Lanka both before and after claiming title to the Kingdom of Kotte after the death of Don Juan Dharmapala in 1597, and cite as examples various instances of acts of persecution, discrimination, and destruction of places of worship of the Buddhists. The strategies adopted by foreign missionaries to propagate Christianity including extensive use of inducements to entice conversion from Buddhism to Christianity will also be explored.

An underlying theme of this paper is cognizance of the irony that some of the Western countries that champion human rights in the modern era and lecture on religious liberty to descendants of the persecuted victims in the Third World, are the very same countries that had in the past systematically violated the human rights of the colonized in non-Christian societies. In particular the latter's inalienable rights to freedom of religious worship. At the end of this essay the question is raised whether Sri Lanka has a tenable claim for a public apology, reparations and compensation from the Western colonial powers, particularly Portugal, for crimes against humanity such as mass murder, war crimes, religious and ethnic cleansing, the theft of cultural artifacts, forcible conversion, large-scale destruction and plunder of Buddhist and Hindu temples and seats of higher learning in the country. It is hoped that the examination of these issues would contribute in some meaningful way to the anticipated public discussion on "Portugal's role as a colonial power in Sri Lanka"

that is likely to be held in year 2005 to mark the 500th anniversary (1505-2005) of the arrival of the Portuguese at Colombo.

This essay is based on research and examination of the writings of eminent historians and commentators, including both Portuguese and Sri Lankan, and Sinhalese historical chronicles such as the *Culavamsa* and the *Rajavaliya*.

### The first phase of Western colonialism: the Portuguese period (1505-1658)

The European entry into Asia, commencing with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, was driven by two principal factors, namely the aim of colonizing Asian countries for purpose of trade and exploitation of natural resources, and converting the inhabitants of these lands to Christianity. The Portuguese had as one of its primary aims the propagation of the Christian faith in the newly "discovered" lands of Asia, including Sri Lanka (called "Ceilao" by the Portuguese) and the realization of this aim was accompanied by steps taken to suppress wherever possible all other religions extant in these lands, namely Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

#### Crown patronage of missionary activity in the East

The Portuguese authority to spread Christianity in the East was derived from the Papal Bulls issued by the Popes namely Calixtus III, Nicholas V, Alexander VI and the Pope's treaty of Tordesillas (in 1492), which divided the newly "discovered" lands between Spain and Portugal, and imposed on the rulers of these countries the duty of propagating the Christian faith. The Western part of the world was allocated to Spain and the Eastern part to Portugal.

To the Portuguese, the Christianization of newly "discovered" lands was a State objective. The Portuguese Crown maintained the entire ecclesiastical establishment in the East.

The doctrine of Padroado (jus patronatus established by the Papal Bulls of 1514) provided the authority for missionary work to be in the hands of the Portuguese Crown in areas where Portugal claimed political rights. The noted historian C. R. Boxer says, "The conviction that Portugal was the missionary nation above all the others in the Western World — Alferes da Fe, "standard bearer of the faith" as the poetplaywright Gil Vicente boasted — was widespread and deeply rooted among all classes." Further royal dispatches addressed to Viceroys, Governors and Bishops began with these words (or words to that effect), "Forasmuch as the first and principal obligation of the Kings of Portugal is to forward the work of conversion by all means in their power ..."

The Padroado has been loosely defined as a combination of the rights, privileges and duties granted by the Papacy to the Crown of Portugal as a patron of the Roman Catholic missions and ecclesiastical establishments in the regions of Africa, Asia and Brazil.<sup>3</sup> The *Padroado Real*, or Royal patronage of the Church, overseas was one of the most cherished prerogatives of the Portuguese Crown. It was to become the cause of bitter disputes between Portuguese missionaries and other Roman Catholic powers.<sup>4</sup>

Diogo do Couto, the Portuguese soldier-cum-chronicler says in his sixth book *Decadas\** (1612) that "The Kings of Portugal always aimed in this conquest of the East at so uniting the two powers, spiritual and temporal, that the one should never be exercised without the other." Father Paulo de Trindade, the Franciscan Chronicler, writing in his *Spiritual Conquest of the East* at Goa in 1638, says "The two swords of the civil and the ecclesiastical power were always so close together in the conquest of the East that we seldom find one being used without the other: for the weapons only conquered through

<sup>\*</sup>The first three volumes of *Décadas da Ásia*, written by the Portuguese historian and civil servant João de Barros (between 1552 and 1615), gave an epic account of Portuguese conquests in Asia, especially India. Diogo do Couto continued the series, adding several volumes. (Eds.)

the right that the preaching of the Gospel gave them, and the preaching was only of some use when it was accompanied and protected by the weapons."6

It is in the exercise of the *Padroado Real* that we see the close collaboration between the Church and the State in the promotion of Christian missionary activity in conquered lands. An important component of this relationship was the doctrinal position of the Papacy, which was vigorously upheld by the Church that "temporal possessions were occupied unlawfully by the infidels" in conquered lands and that these "should be allotted among the faithful." There was an interlocking policy of temporal and spiritual objectives where benefits flowed to both the Vatican and Portugal.

### The Dark Age in Sri Lanka's history

The propagation of Christianity commenced with the arrival of the Portuguese in Colombo in 1505, in a fleet of ships commanded by a young sailor, Don Lourenco de Almeida, son of the first Portuguese viceroy of India. Father S. G. Perera in his book *A History of Ceylon\* for Schools* divides the Portuguese presence in the island as falling into three distinct stages:<sup>7</sup> a) Portuguese-Sinhalese alliance (1505-1551); b) Portuguese Protectorate of Kotte (1551-1597); c) Portuguese Domination (1597-1658).

Learned historians and commentators now generally regard the arrival of the Portuguese in the year 1505 as the beginning of the Dark Age in the history of Sri Lanka. The Portuguese, through a policy of cunning statecraft and ruthless terror, were able to govern the coastal areas of the island for most of the next 150 years, until the Dutch replaced them in 1658. The *Rajavaliya* describes the entry of the Portuguese into Sri Lanka thus: "There is in our harbour of Colombo a race of people, fair of skin and comely withal. They don jackets and hats of iron, rest not a minute in one place but walk here and

<sup>\*</sup>Ceylon is Sri Lanka's former name. (Eds.)

there. They eat hunks of stone and drink blood."8

Several noted historians and commentators have expressed their indignation over the methods employed by the Portuguese during their period of dominance in the following words. Sir James Emerson Tennent refers to the Portuguese conduct in Sri Lanka in these terms:

There is no page in the story of European colonization more gloomy and repulsive than that which recounts the proceedings of the Portuguese in Ceylon. Astonished at the magnitude of their enterprises, and the glory of their discoveries and conquests in India, the rapidity and success of which secured for Portugal an unprecedented renown, we are ill-prepared to hear of the rapacity, bigotry and cruelty which characterized every stage of their progress in the East. They appeared in the Indian seas in the three-fold character of merchants, missionaries and pirates. Their ostensible motto was amity, commerce and religion. Their expeditions consisted of soldiers as well as adventurers, and included friars and chaplain majors. Their instructions were to begin by preaching, but, that failing, to proceed to the decision of the sword.9

### The historian Paul E. Peiris observes:

They found in Ceylon a contented race, and a fairly prosperous country... and it is melancholy to reflect that they succeeded in producing nothing but chaos. Out of a long list of high-born Hidalgos\* whom Portugal sent to Ceylon, it is difficult to point to one name as that of an enlightened statesman and high-principled administrator. No stately fabric remains as compensating for that religious fanaticism to which ample witness is borne by the devastated

<sup>\*</sup> Hidalgos (in Spanish) or Fidalgos (in Portuguese) were noblemen of a secondary rank. (Eds.)

ruins of those lovely structures which the piety of generations had strewn broadcast over the country. Their bequest to the Dutch was a colony of half-castes, a failing agriculture, a depopulated country, and a miserable and ill-conditioned people. They had in Ceylon an opportunity almost unique in the experience of European nations in the East, but their moral fibre had proved unequal to the occasion. <sup>10</sup>

G. P. Malalasekera, in his Ph.D. dissertation later published as a book under the title *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, makes the following comment in lucid language on the high-handed methods employed by the Portuguese in pursuit of their colonial objectives, which included conversion of the people of the country into Christianity and the concomitant repression of Buddhism:

Every stage of their progress was marked by a rapacity, bigotry, cruelty and inhumanity unparalleled in the annals of any other European colonial power. Their ferocity and their utter indifference of all suffering increased with the success of their army; their inhuman barbarities were accompanied by callousness which knew no distinction between man, woman and child; no feeling of compassion was strong enough to stay their savage hands in their fell work. To terrify their subjects and bring home to them the might of the Portuguese Power, they committed atrocities which, had they not been found recorded in the Decadas of their friendly historians, would seem too revolting to be true. Babes were spitted on the soldier's pikes and held up that their parents might hear the young cocks crow. Sometimes they were mashed to pulp between millstones, while their mothers were compelled to witness the pitiful sight before they themselves were tortured to death. Men were thrown over bridges for the amusement of the troops to feed the crocodiles in

the river, which eventually grew so tame that at whistle they would raise their heads above the water in anticipation of the welcome feast.<sup>11</sup> ...\*

# The introduction of Christianity into Sri Lanka

The Portuguese landed in Colombo in 1505. Within a few years of their arrival they were able to establish permanent trading settlements and then indulge in a game of intrigue and blackmail with the various rulers and minor chiefs of the country. They harassed Bhuvanekabahu (King of Kotte from 1521-1551) to a great degree and kept him in a state of dependence on the military and naval power of the Portuguese. The Portuguese conspired with minor chiefs who owed allegiance to the King of Kotte and offered them various inducements to turn against the lawful sovereign of the country.

The Portuguese imperial agenda was to create discord in the country and then take advantage of the situation to siphon off wealth from Sri Lanka and convert Buddhists into Christianity, who, in their calculation, would then remain loyal to the Portuguese Crown rather than to the Sinhalese kings of the land. The Portuguese period particularly from 1540 onwards witnessed a series of military conflicts that left the maritime provinces of the country devastated and desolate.

Events moved in such a manner that Bhuvanekabahu was forced to rely totally on his foreign allies for his survival and that of his kingdom. In 1543, desiring to make his grandson Dharmapala his successor, he dispatched a statue of his grandson made of ivory, gold and silver, and wearing on its head a jewelled crown studded with Lanka's finest gems, to Lisbon, where a ceremony marking the coronation of the effigy by the Portuguese King Dom João III, was held.

The Portuguese exacted a heavy toll from the besieged royal

<sup>\*</sup> We have omitted here a section entitled "Methods employed for conversion and suppression of non-Christian religions" as those methods are largely covered elsewhere in this Part 3. (Eds.)

house of Kotte. In return for this recognition of Dharmapala as heir to the kingdom, the Portuguese demanded an open door to preach the Christian gospel anywhere in the dominion of the Sinhalese king. A party of Franciscan monks accompanied the envoys of Bhuvanekabahu on their return from Lisbon to Colombo in 1543. This group was led by friar João de Vila de Conde. They immediately set about their task of converting the Sinhalese. They brought undue influence on Dharmapala whom they had tutored in his youth, and made him renounce Buddhism, hitherto the State religion of Lanka, and embrace Christianity. Dharmapala was baptized under the name Don Juan Periya Bandara and his Queen was baptized as Dona Catherina.

With the conversion of Dharmapala in 1557, members of the Sinhalese aristocracy followed suit. Dharmapala became a willing collaborator in the systematic repression of Buddhism. Such conduct generated hostility against Christianity. The *Rajavaliya* records:

King Bhuvanekabahu having foolishly lived on terms of close intimacy with the Portuguese entrusted to the king of Portugal the Prince (Dharmapala) whom he had brought up. On account of this foolish act the Portuguese brought harm on the king. It should be noted that King Bhuvanekabahu was the cause of the injustice which his posterity had to suffer; and that the harm done to the cause of Buddhism after this was due to the action of this king. 12

Father Fernao de Queyroz, the famed Portuguese historian says, "There were some who refused him [Dharmapala] allegiance, holding it an insult to them that the heir to the Empire should follow Christ, and that it was harder than death to obey a Christian Prince. Dom João [Dharmapala] took little heed of this, punishing some and rewarding others and obliging many by his example to despise idols, and destroying the greater part of the pagodas [temples]." Queyroz adds that

Dharmapala soon after his conversion gave directions to his officials that all Buddhist temple lands should be seized and diverted to the use of the seminaries and colleges run by the Franciscans. This step was taken most likely at the prompting of the Franciscans. There was a protest by Buddhist monks over this issue in front of the King's Palace at Kotte, which led to the indiscriminate arrest of thirty Buddhist monks from a temple in Kotte and their immediate execution under the orders of the Portuguese Captain-General. Prof. Tennakoon Vimalananda comments: "Thus began the gradual destruction of Buddhism, the only organization which existed for the spiritual and intellectual education of the people of Ceylon." <sup>15</sup>

## Four Missionary Orders

The Portuguese era was marked by intense Roman Catholic missionary activity. The missionaries belonged to four different missionary orders: the Franciscans, the Jesuits, the Augustinians and the Dominicans. The Franciscans were the first to arrive (in 1543) and they had a monopoly of missionary activity for about fifty years. Father Paulo Trinidade, a Franciscan monk has left an account of his experiences in Ceylon, in a book written in 1638; The Spiritual Conquest of the East. The Jesuits arrived in 1602. The Augustinians and the Dominicans set foot in Colombo in the same year, i.e. 1606. There was also another group of missionaries called the Capuchin monks; they constituted a branch of the Franciscan Order. Intense rivalry between these missionary orders led to demarcation of their spheres of activity by the Viceroy at Goa, pursuant to a request made by the King of Portugal in 1609. 16

# Deceitful strategies in proselytizing Tamil Hindus

The Roman Catholic Church divided the country into two main zones for the purpose of proselytizing. There was a marked difference in the methods adopted for missionary work in the different regions. In the North, Roman Catholic clergy pretended to be Brahmins from the West.\*... Tennent comments as follows:

They [the Roman Catholic priests] assumed the character of Brahmans of a superior caste from the Western World; they took Hindu names, and conformed to the heathen customs of this haughty and exclusive race, producing, in support of their pretensions, a deed forged in ancient characters, to show that the Brahmans of Rome were of much older date than the Brahmans of India,\*\* and descended in an equally direct line from the Brahma himself. ... They composed a pretended Veda,\*\*\* in which they sought to institute the doctrines of Christianity in the language and phraseology of the sacred books of the Hindus. They wore orange-coloured robes peculiar to the Saniasses [Sannyasis]. They hung a tiger's skin from their shoulders, in imitation of Shiva, they performed the ablutions required by the Shastras; they carried on their foreheads the sacred spot of sandalwood powder; and in order to sustain their assumed character to the utmost, they affected to spurn the Pariahs and lower castes who lay no claim to the same divine origin with the Brahmins.17

The Roman Catholic missionaries in employing methods such as poojas, processions, images, pilgrimages, holy water, feasts, fasts, prayers for the dead, dancers (like those in a

<sup>\*</sup> Abbé Dubois explains in great detail the reasons for this devious strategy; see "The 'Career of Proselytism'" below in this Part 3. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Dr. C. I. Issac in his "Kerala – the Gateway to Indian Christianity" (see above in this Part 3) shows how missionaries used similar fabrications to claim a remote antiquity in Kerala. Even today, assertions that "Indian Christianity is more ancient than Hinduism" are not uncommon. This is, of course, nothing but good old Suppressio veri, suggestio falsi. (Eds.) \*\*\*This probably refers to the notorious Ezour-Vedam, a fabrication by Pondicherry Jesuits in the eighteenth century. (Eds.)

Hindu temple), that were utterly deceitful, were impliedly indicating that they were prepared to go to any length however crooked the means adopted would be, so long as their final objective could be achieved. Prof. Tennakoon Vimalananda says, "By a system of mingled deception and hypocrisy they enlisted followers from other faiths to the Roman Catholic Church." <sup>18</sup>

### Mass conversions

Many coastal communities in Sri Lanka underwent mass conversion, particularly in Jaffna, Mannar, and among the fishing communities living north of Colombo such as in Negombo and Chilaw. Roman Catholic churches with schools attached to them served Catholic communities all over the country. These schools also contributed to the spread of the Portuguese language, notably among the upper classes of society. The efforts of Roman Catholic clergy, particularly the harsh methods adopted to convert Buddhists and reduce the influence of Buddhism among the public, were viewed with great alarm by the Buddhist Sangha, which, upon the conversion of Dharmapala and the seizure of Buddhist temples, had fled from Kotte to the kingdoms of Sitavaka and Kandy.

But there was not much that the Sangha could do. The state of Buddhism and the political condition of the country were at a low ebb. There were petty feuds and jealousies between the rulers of various principalities. With no paramount figure commanding the allegiance of the entire country, there were regular revolts and insurrections. Patriotic zeal for public welfare was severely lacking. It was a sad situation for the people and the country. These were ideal conditions for the Portuguese authorities to intervene with the help of the Roman Catholic Church and unleash an aggressive campaign of proselytization and repression of Buddhism.

Why did Buddhism collapse in Portuguese-held territory without striking a single blow in self-defence? Ever since the

advent of Arahant Mahinda in the third century BC, there has been a close relationship between the Sinhalese monarchs and Buddhism. State patronage and heavy reliance on the State by the Sangha on every important matter including Sangha reform left no room for the development of independent and voluntary Buddhist organizations. The Sangha itself was amorphous. Further, there was no doctrinal or scriptural endorsement of self-defence or holy war as found in religions such as Islam or Christianity. Therefore when State patronage was removed and later the State became an instrument of terror, the collapse of Buddhism as a public religion in Kotte was inevitable. <sup>20</sup>

Another important reason is that the competitor for the religious allegiance of the Buddhists, namely the Roman Catholic Church, had the full backing of the economic strength of the State and military and naval power of the Portuguese. The campaign against Buddhism thus had the involvement of three principal agencies: (1) The Roman Catholic Emperor of Portugal; (2) his Viceroy at Goa; and (3) the Roman Catholic priests in Sri Lanka. Prof. Tennakoon Vimalananda notes: They were all united in the effort completely to destroy Buddhism in our country. As the Portuguese were in possession of the sea coast of Ceylon, the Buddhists could not communicate with any sympathetic power outside Ceylon for help at that hour. Thus the Roman Catholic Church in Ceylon embarked upon a campaign of destruction and bloodshed unopposed by any political power.

# Destruction and plunder of Buddhist temples

The Portuguese ransacked and burnt all the Buddhist temples, Hindu Kovils ["temple," in Tamil] and Muslim mosques in their areas of control. Today, there hardly exists a Buddhist temple over 150 years old in areas once ruled by the Portuguese, particularly in the maritime coast. The destruction of Buddhist temples can be brought under four categories when

examining the evidence:<sup>23</sup> a) implementation of the decisions of the Portuguese Crown, Viceroy at Goa, and the Ecclesiastical Council at Goa; a) war strategy, to cause the diversion of the enemy armies through destruction; c) method of compensation for the soldiery without causing a drain on the Portuguese treasury (war booty for the soldiers); d) excesses of the Portuguese Captain-General (e.g. Azavedo) and the greed of the Roman Catholic Church for temple land. D. G. B. de Silva says that all these four factors had their interplay in Sri Lanka as in other lands under Portuguese control. Therefore it can be surmised that the "policy" was followed....

The expedition undertaken by the Portuguese general Thome de Souza Arronches to destroy villages, ports, and temples lying in the southern coast during the siege of Colombo by Sitavaka Rajasinghe in 1587-1588, took place two years after the direction given at the meeting of the Ecclesiastical Council at Goa in 1585 to the Portuguese authorities to destroy the idols and places of worship of the infidels. <sup>24</sup> Some of the great Buddhist and Hindu temples were plundered; those destroyed by the Portuguese include the "thousand pillar" temples in Devundara, and Trincomalee, Saman Devale in Ratnapura, Sunethra Devi Pirivena in Kotte, Vidagama Pirivena in Raigama, and the Wijebahu Pirivena in Totagamuwe (near Hikkaduwa), temples at Nawagamuwa, Kelaniya, Mapitigama and Wattala.

In the past, Sri Lanka had faced invaders from South India who sacked the Buddhist Viharas in places like Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, but it was never their policy to build their religious edifices on the sites of destroyed Buddhist institutions. In contrast, the Portuguese conquistadors in close collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church, set in motion a ruthless policy of not only destroying the Buddhist Viharas and monasteries, but also using the materials collected from the ruins to build their churches on the same sites. For example, the Roman Catholic Churches at Kalutara, Totagamuwa, Keragala, Wattala, etc., were built on the sites of Viharas.<sup>25</sup>

In 1575, the Portuguese led by the Captain-General of Colombo, Diogo de Melo, attacked and demolished completely the Kelaniya temple, which was of inestimable value to the Buddhists. The villagers who resisted were either killed or thrown into the Kelani river where they drowned. In Kelaniya, a temple building known in classical literature as the Kitsiri Mevan Paya disappeared without a trace; it was part of the Kelaniya Mahavihara. The Portuguese built the Church of St. Anne at the site of the destroyed temple.

According to oral traditions the Portuguese upon entering any village would systematically destroy the nerve centre, i.e. the Buddhist temple, and then erect a Christian shrine in the village; some of those shrines were to develop later into big churches. The Portuguese put to the sword all those who resisted the destruction of the temples. Queyroz in his monumental work *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon* provides a comprehensive list of the Roman Catholic churches built by the Portuguese, and, without a sense of shame or guilt, he identifies by name and locality the various Churches built on the sites of destroyed Buddhist Viharas and monasteries.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, the villages granted to these temples for the maintenance of the Sangha were removed and reassigned to the maintenance of Catholic churches, some of which were built on the very sites that earlier had Buddhist temples. By 1600, this campaign of destruction which had lasted for about forty years was nearly complete.<sup>27</sup>

Hindu temples were not spared from the destruction. Fellippe de Oliveria, the conqueror of Jaffna, was reputed for having destroyed 500 temples. Some of the temples were converted into churches; one of them was a famous temple in the kingdom of Kotte. Upon Dharmapala joining the Christian fold, Trindade writes, "since they lacked a church where they could hear the word of God and assist at Mass and other Divine Services, the servants of God made use of a famous temple, which was there. They removed all the idols, some of which were of metal, others of stone, others of wood. Some

of them they burnt, others they reduced to powder. They then consecrated it as a temple of God and as a house of prayer, sprinkling Holy Water and reciting prayers which are usually said when a Church is dedicated. In this Church, they taught and they dedicated it to St. Anthony, where we have a Friary and a school for boys."<sup>29</sup> P. E. Peiris comments:

The Missionary could see in Buddhism nothing but the abhorrent creation of the devil; he did not stop to inquire what were the principles which were taught by the sages, nor what the ideals after which its lofty philosophy struggled. Buddhism was not Christianity, and since by Christianity alone could souls escape damnation and hell fire, it was his duty to God to destroy Buddhism by every means in this power. He did not ask whether the people were prepared to receive his new wine or whether the destruction of the ancient beliefs might not mean the destruction of all spiritual life; his every idea was centred on the one thought that Buddhism must be wiped out of existence.<sup>30</sup>

 $G.\ P.\ Malalasekera \ complements\ P.\ E.\ Peiris\ with\ the\ following\ observations$  :

No trouble was spared to achieve that object; monasteries were razed to the ground, and their priceless treasures looted; libraries were set fire to, or the leaves of the books they contained scattered to the wind; whosoever dared to worship in public or wear the yellow robe of the ascetic was visited with death; the great institutions at Totagamuwa and Karagala, which had long carried on the traditions of Taxila and Nalanda, were destroyed and their incumbents put to the sword. ... Never was a glorious civilization and a noble culture more brutally destroyed. The work of centuries was undone in a few years — all that was noblest and best in the heritage of Ceylon was lost, and the damage thus wrought was irreparable.<sup>31</sup>

The destruction of the shrine at Devi Nuwera or Deundara by the Portuguese provides an illustration of the methods adopted. The Portuguese soldiers on their way to Deundara sacked and committed to flames three great Buddhist Viharas. The Portuguese historian Diogo Do Couto describes the attack on the shrine at Devi Nuwara as follows:

The inhabitants, on seeing the Portuguese, abandoned the city, and betook themselves inland. Our people proceeded to enter it without encountering any resistance, and reaching the Pagoda broke open the gates, and entered it without meeting anyone to resist them. and went all round to see if they found any people: and seeing that all was deserted, Thomas de Souza delivered it over to the soldiers that they might do their duty, and the first thing in which they employed themselves was to destroy the idols, of which there were more than a thousand of diverse forms, some of clay, others of wood, others of copper, many of them gilt. Having done this, they demolished the whole of that internal structure of the Dagabas [Buddhist shrine], destroying their vaults and cloisters, knocking them all to pieces, and then proceeded to sack the store houses, in which they found much ivory, fine clothes, copper, pepper, sandalwood, jewels, precious stones and ornaments of the Dagabas, and of every thing they took what they like, and the rest they set fire to by which the whole was consumed. And for the greater insult to the Dagaba, they slaughtered inside several cows, which is the most unclean that can be, and for the purification of which are required very great ceremonies. And they also set fire to a wooden car made after the manner of a towered house of seven storeys, all large and most beautiful, lacquered in divers colours and gilt in many parts, a costly sumptuous work, which served to convey the idol on a ride through the city to which likewise they set fire, by which the whole was consumed.32

# Missionaries accompanied Portuguese expeditionary forces

Missionaries showed as much enthusiasm as the Portuguese soldiers in the conquest of the island, as is evident from the available correspondence. They accompanied every expedition not merely as army chaplains but also to inspire the soldiers in the name of Christ to conquer territory for the King of Portugal.<sup>33</sup> In one instance, in 1611 when the Portuguese army was impeded in their march to Kandy by the swelling of the Mahaweli river, a Catholic friar is said to have dived into it with a crucifix in hand and this gesture inspired the army to follow suit.<sup>34</sup> Queyroz writes:

To arms, To arms, To arms and let not Catholic hearts bear to see Heresy reigning in Ceylon. All these Religious with great zeal served God and the King in the conquest, helping in the campaigns and the sieges of Colombo like any other soldier, and so great was the experience and courage of Friar Antonio Peyxoto the Franciscan, of whom we spoke a short time ago, that in peace and war they made him for some time a Captain of a regiment of the Chingalaz.<sup>35</sup>

### **Execution of Buddhist monks**

Oral history contains accounts of the indiscriminate murder of Buddhist monks by the Portuguese in areas under their control. The deliberate destruction and plunder of Buddhist temples is unlikely to have taken place without some protest by the incumbent monks. The Portuguese, given their medieval upbringing and uncompromising stance on matters of religion, would not have brooked any opposition to their use of force to obliterate non-Christian religions.

The destruction of the Wijebahu Pirivena at Thotagamuwa (near Hikkaduwa) also resulted in the death of some of the incumbent monks who could not escape in time. Thirty of

them were arrested from a temple and executed soon after some monks and civilians had protested in front of the King's Palace at Kotte upon the conversion of Dharmapala. Three monks from Kandy were punished when they appealed to the people of Alutkuru Korale and adjoining villages to revert to Buddhism and asked for contributions "for the decoration of the shrine of Kandy." The Captain-General Nuno Alvares Pereira ordered the Buddhist monks to be arrested; their leader was condemned to be thrown to the man-eating crocodiles of the Rosapane river, while another two monks were taken as slaves by Phillip de Oliviera, the conqueror of Jaffna. The Jesuit Friar Pelingotti tried to convert them to Christianity much to the annoyance of the people of the area.

#### Inducements to convert

The Portuguese while pursuing a policy of destruction and plunder of Buddhist temples held out various inducements for Buddhists to convert to Christianity. Conversion meant a sure means of exemption from taxes due to the Government.\* For example, Christians were exempt from the *marala*, i.e. death duties.<sup>39</sup> This meant that they could leave the entirety of their property to their heirs upon death. Therefore deathbed conversions became quite common to enable one's kinsmen to secure property upon death. This was a privilege granted only to Christians.

Further, becoming a Christian also meant receiving preferential judicial treatment. Murderers and thieves upon embracing Christianity were able to escape severe punishment such as the death penalty. Wing Bhuvanekabahu VII himself complained to the king of Portugal that criminals were converting to Christianity purely to obtain lenient punishment. The King of Portugal had issued standing orders to the Viceroy of Goa to pursue a policy of lenience towards converts accused of crimes. This policy was followed in Portuguese-held areas

<sup>\*</sup> As was the case in Goa for Hindus. (Eds.)

of Sri Lanka. In 1618, pursuant to Jesuit intervention, an order that "no Christian prisoner be put to death" was said to have been issued.<sup>41</sup>

The local aristocracy was enticed to convert on the basis that they would be accepted into the *fidalgo* class (upper class) of Portugal and allowed the use of the honorific title "Dom." For example, the well-known Sitawaka court poet Alagiyawanna upon baptism became known as Dom Jeronimo Alagiyawanna.<sup>42</sup>

Ordinary Sinhala people saw in the newly introduced religion ways and means of acquiring benefits including placing themselves outside the jurisdiction of the civil and criminal laws of their King. In a letter dated 21 January 1549 addressed to the king of Portugal, Friar Antonio do Casal informed the King as follows: "Those of the country do not want to become Christians except through interest and ask before baptism what benefit there is."

Upon baptism the converts began to see themselves as coming within the legal jurisdiction of the monarch of Portugal and such attitudes were reinforced by the keen interest shown by the Portuguese Crown in the welfare of Sinhala converts. The process of conversion did not stop at baptism; the Missionaries also promoted with zeal the intolerance of practices rooted in Buddhism. Any compromise with Buddhism or Buddhist way of life was to be avoided: the eating of beef, slaughter of animals, consumption of liquor and the like were openly promoted on the assumption that such conduct would put the convert altogether beyond the pale of Buddhism.

# Bequeath of the Kingdom of Kotte to the Portuguese crown

Dharmapala's conversion and withdrawal of royal patronage from Buddhism was followed by the most shameful act of treachery in the history of Sri Lanka, when Don Juan Dharmapala by a formal Act gifted the reversion of his rights

to his kingdom to King Philip I of Portugal. When Dharmapala died on May 27, 1597, King Philip I of Portugal laid claim to the Lion throne of Lanka. $^{44}$ 

This event tightened Portugal's grip over all areas of the country other than the kingdom of Kandy and contributed to further repression of Buddhism. Historian Tikiri Abeysinghe in his book *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594-1612* observes that the whole machinery of the Portuguese-controlled State was geared to achieve two complementary ends, namely that the local religions, i.e. Buddhism and Hinduism, be denied public existence, and secondly holding out every inducement to the convert. . . .

## Conversion of Prince Vijaya Pala

The Portuguese were able to exert undue influence on a number of members of the Royal households of Kotte, Sitavaka and Kandy to embrace Christianity. This was done largely by way of missionary education, which was directed by political considerations. From the early period of Portuguese presence we learn that King Bhuvanekabahu was able to avoid being converted though Franciscan friars applied much pressure on him to do so; but he was unable to prevent missionaries from gaining intimate access to his court. Missionaries tutored his grandson Dharmapala, which finally resulted in him being baptized.

Likewise in the Kandyan Kingdom, Vikrama Bahu's son, the feeble-minded Jayavira, was converted, and from her infant days Jayavira's daughter Dona Catherina was brought up by missionaries. King Senerat who married Dona Catherina after the death of her first husband Wimala Dharma Suriya, was liberal-minded but not farsighted; he allowed their children, mostly at the request of his wife, to be instructed by Franciscan priests. That had a denationalizing effect at least on some of the children.

The classic example is Prince Vijaya Pala: his conversion to

Christianity reveals deep-seated strategies of the Portuguese State and Church to turn members of Sinhalese Royal families away from Buddhism. King Senerat chose his youngest son Maha Astana (later known as Rajasinghe II) to succeed him in the Kanda Uda Rata, overriding the claims of the latter's elder brothers, Kumara Sinha and Vijaya Pala. Senarat was aware of the predisposition of young Vijaya Pala towards things Portuguese. Vijaya Pala himself acknowledges this inclination in his correspondence to the Viceroy of Goa as follows: "I was born with a strong predilection for the Portuguese nation. In my earliest days greatly to the satisfaction of the Queen my mother, there was assigned to me as Mestre the Padre Frey Francisco Negrao, who taught me to read and write. Under his instructions I learnt very good customs and etiquette and some special habits which Royal persons employ. Though I am a Chingala by blood I am a Portuguese in my ways and affections." Vijaya Pala then laments bitterly: "This is the chief reason for my losing my kingdom, treasures, the Queen my wife, my son, and all that I possessed."45 In another letter Vijaya Pala writes, "I have no confidence in my own people."46

Paul E. Peiris, referring to the above statements of Vijaya Pala, notes: "A more saddening confession it is not easy to imagine; his pride of race and country were destroyed, and in place of the fervid patriotism which alone befitted a Prince of the Royal family in this, the long-drawn-out death agony of his people, was substituted an apelike imitation of Portuguese habits and ways of thought." Vijaya Pala, harbouring a bitter grudge against his brother Rajasinghe, crossed over to the Portuguese side seeking military assistance to overthrow his brother and gain the kingdom of Kandy for himself. The Portuguese instead detained him in Colombo and later took him to Goa where Vijaya Pala came under intense pressure to convert. He was baptized on December 8, 1646, at a ceremony held at the Church of Sao Francisco and given a new name, Dom Theodosio. The Viceroy of Goa ceremoniously

crowned him the new "Emperor of Candia."<sup>48</sup> But he was not allowed to leave Goa. <sup>49</sup> His entourage, totalling 94 persons including generals of his army, four princes of the royal family and his ambassador, were also baptized on the same day.<sup>50</sup>

The reason why Vijaya Pala was not allowed to return to Matale, his abode, was an order given by the Portuguese king to his officials in the mission fields that "If by any means or chance any King or Prince, Gentile fall into our power, he should not be allowed to return to his territories to continue in their rites and ceremonies;" instead such Princes should be persuaded to receive the water of Holy Baptism.<sup>51</sup>

Vijaya Pala died in 1654 in Goa, a highly disappointed, broken man, and a victim of crass stupidity and a denationalizing missionary education that finally had the effect of pushing him to desert his country, cross over to the enemy, denounce his race, betray his religion and ultimately give up his Sinhala birth name for the sake of an alien Portuguese name. In fairness to Vijaya Pala, he was not alone among the ruling classes of this country during the long colonial period to find resounding honorifics from foreign conquerors an acceptable compensation for the loss of the reality of power.

### Claims for compensation

Sri Lanka was a victim of Western colonialism for a period of nearly 450 years. The rigour of rapacious colonialism was felt in its most brutal form during the Portuguese period (1505-1658). In exchange for the wonders of Christianity, the Portuguese empowered by the unstinted blessings of the Papacy and the Portuguese Crown, exploited the conquered territories to the maximum by stripping the country's resources, labour, and the treasures of the Royal houses of Kotte, Sitavaka and Kandy. Parallel to this policy was their unrelenting engagement in the destruction of the cultural and religious heritage of the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The development of Sri Lanka stagnated during the colonial period. Much of the

backwardness of postcolonial societies is now attributed by experts to the setbacks suffered by the victims at both the physical and psychological levels. There is no dispute that the Western countries were unjustly enriched and profited substantially from their colonial adventures.

The question arises whether Sri Lanka as a victim of Western colonial expansion has the right to claim compensation from the Western colonial powers. In respect to the Portuguese period, which is the focus of this paper, it is clear that some of the acts of violence and destruction perpetrated by the Portuguese constitute "crimes" in international law as understood today. These crimes can be broadly categorized as follows: i) destruction of life — individual and mass murder; ii) cultural genocide; iii) religious and ethnic cleansing including mass expulsions, e.g. of Muslims from the areas under Portuguese control; iv) expropriation and removal of treasures, artifacts, gems and jewellery, gift items made of ivory etc. to Portugal; v) destruction and plunder of Buddhist temples; vi) construction of churches on sites of destroyed Buddhist Viharas and monasteries; vii) prohibition of the practice of non-Christian religions, i.e. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam; viii) religious conversion by use of force; ix) offer of inducements to embrace Christianity; x) channelling of revenue due to Buddhist temples to Christian Churches and Seminaries; xi) sexual abuse of women; xii) slavery; xiii) war crimes.

# Remedies: a public apology from the Pope and Portugal

There are precedents:

1. On March 12, 2000, the Vatican released a document entitled *Memory and Reconciliation: the Church and the Faults of the Past,* in which it sought pardon for sins committed against other cultures including the colonization of native people. This document attributes the roots of evil today to the past errors of the Catholics.

Pope John Paul II has publicly asked God's forgiveness for the sins of Roman Catholics through the ages, including wrongs inflicted on Jews, women and minorities. "We are asking pardon for the divisions among Christians, for the use of violence that some have committed in the service of truth, and for attitudes of mistrust and hostility assumed toward followers of other religions," said Pope John Paul II. The phrase "violence in the service of truth" is an often used reference to the treatment of heretics during the Inquisition, the Crusades, and forced conversions of native peoples. 52 \*

2. Pope John Paul apologized to China in 2001 for the errors of the Christian missionaries during the colonial period.\*\*

The full text of this non-apology can be found on the Internet at: www.vatican.va/roman\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\_documents/rc\_con\_cfaith\_doc\_20000307\_memory-reconc-itc\_en.html or at: www.christlife.org/jubilee/essays/C\_memoryandrec.html. (Eds.) \*\*Which is a reflection of China's diplomatic strength as opposed to

India's. (Eds.)

<sup>\*</sup> In fact, neither the Pope's homily of 12 March 2000 nor the document Memory and Reconciliation: the Church and the Faults of the Past (of December 1999) appended to it made any reference to colonialism, to other cultures, to women or minorities. No specific apology was made, except, in the mildest possible language, to the Jews. There was no mention of the millions of Native American, African or Asian victims of the Church's aggression. In the Vatican's typical ambiguous language, while asking for "forgiveness" for the Church's unspecified "use of violence," the Pope emphasized the Church's "marvelous harvest of holiness, of missionary spirit, of total dedication to Christ and to our neighbors," and added: "At the same time, as we confess our faults" (without however spelling them out, which is as good as no confession at all), "we forgive the faults committed by others in our meetings. In the course of history, innumerably many times Christians have suffered vexation, domination, and persecution for reason of their faith. As the victims of these abuses forgave, so must we forgive." How magnanimous for that arch-aggressor, the Roman Catholic Church, to be so forgiving. In addition, the Pope never spoke of reparations, much less of opening the Vatican's archives so as to make a clean breast of all its "faults." What the Church really asks of its victims is not to "forgive," but to "forget." But here again, remembrance is a sacred duty.

The pontiff avoided detailing the Church's mistakes in its evangelical efforts in China. He defended the "outstanding evangelising commitment" of a long line of missionaries, but said many had erred. The pontiff asked for "the forgiveness and understanding of those who may have felt hurt in some way by such actions on the part of Christians."<sup>53</sup>

- 3. When visiting Ukraine and Greece in 2001, Pope John Paul appealed for forgiveness for wrongs perpetrated by Roman Catholics in the past.
- 4. The Pope has also asked for forgiveness from Israel for sins committed by Roman Catholics throughout the ages including wrongs done to Jews, women and minorities, while on a visit to Israel in 2000. However it must be noted that the Pope has yet to tender an apology directed specifically at Buddhists and Hindus of Sri Lanka and India for wrongs committed by Christian missionaries in these two countries.\*

### Reparations

It is not within the scope of this paper to engage in a discussion on the viability of instituting legal proceedings against Portugal and other Western countries under the rules of public international law seeking reparations for wrongs done during the colonial period. Nevertheless it is necessary to draw attention to the existence of a potential claim for reparations from Portugal and colonial powers.

Reparations or compensation are payments offered as an indemnity for loss or damage. There are several instances in history where this has been done and which provide a basis for developing this area of the law in respect to obtaining compensation for crimes committed during the period of Western colonialism.

<sup>\*</sup>Which is a reflection of Israel's diplomatic strength as opposed to India's. (Eds.)

In 1953 the West German government agreed to pay reparations to Israel for damages suffered by the Jews under the Hitler regime. Japan had to pay reparations after World War II. The United States administered removal of capital goods from Japan, and the USSR seized Japanese assets in the former puppet state of Manchukuo. Japan also agreed to settle the reparations claims of Asian nations by individual treaties with those countries. These treaties were subsequently negotiated.

At a United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa from 31 August to 7 September 2001, representatives from third-world countries, primarily African, told the Conference that the problems facing their nations, among them, widespread poverty and underdevelopment, stemmed in part from slavery and colonialism. The wrongs, they further said, could only be corrected by clear acceptance of the past by the oppressing countries, and by developing schemes for compensation. A number of the speakers urged the Conference to recognize that colonialism and slavery were crimes against humanity.

### Conclusion

450 years of colonial rule and particularly the Portuguese period (1505-1658) constitute a long and poignant chronicle of oppression and injustice meted out to the Sinhala Buddhists. It is a sad and tragic chapter. The Portuguese success might have become irreversible if not for the heroic resistance offered by the kings of Sitavaka and Kandy against foreign aggression. Sri Lanka might have become another "Philippines" — an Asian country that has been stripped of its traditional religion and culture and where, to complete the humiliation, the indigenous people, i.e. the Filipinos, have to bear the ignominy of that country being named after a Spanish king, Phillip.

The threat to Sri Lanka's sovereignty and the pre-eminent

position of Buddhism in the country's religious and cultural landscape, has resurfaced from quarters both within and without the country.

It is a hackneyed truism but worth reasserting that those who forget the lessons of history are condemned to live through a re-enactment. In such a context, a wider examination and earnest study of Sri Lanka's history under Western colonial rule and more particularly the factors that contributed to Buddhism becoming almost extinct in Portuguese-controlled territory may prove invaluable.

#### 80 03

#### References

- 1. Boxer, C.R., The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825 (London: Hutchinson), 231
- 2. Ibid., 231
- 3. Ibid., 228
- 4. Ibid.
- 5. Ibid.
- 6. Ibid.
- Perera, S. G., A History of Ceylon for Schools: The Portuguese and the Dutch Periods 1505-1795 (Colombo: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd., 1932), 134
- Rajavaliya, A Historical Narrative of Sinhalese Kings from Vijaya to Vimala Dharma Surya II (Colombo: Government Printer, 1900), 63
- 9. Tennent, Sir James Emerson, quoted in *The Betrayal of Buddhism*, Abridged version of the Report of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry, 1956, vii-viii
- Peiris, P.E., quoted in *The Betrayal of Buddhism*, Abridged version of the Report of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry, 1956, ix-x
- 11. Malalasekera, G. P., The Pali Literature of Ceylon (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994), 261-262 (quoting Manuel de Faria e Sousa, The Portuguese Asia)
- 12. Rajavaliya, 68
- 13. Queyroz, Fernao de, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, quoted in O.M. de Silva Cosme, Fidalgos in the Kingdom of Kottte (1505-1656) (Colombo: 1990), 140
- 14. Ibid., 144

- 15. Vimalananda, Tennakoon, Buddhism in Ceylon under the Christian Powers (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, 1963), xxv
- 16. Abeysinghe, Tikiri, Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594-1612 (Colombo: Lake House Investments, 1966), 199
- 17. Tennent, Sir James Emerson, Christianity in Ceylon (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1998), 17
- 18. Vimalananda, Tennakoon, Buddhism in Ceylon under the Christian Powers, xxvii
- 19. Abeysinghe, Tikiri, Portuguese Rule in Ceylon 1594-1612, 210
- 20. Abeysinghe, Tikiri, Portuguese Rule, 210
- 21. Ibid.
- 22. Ibid.
- 23. De Silva, D.G.B, "Temples, Buildings, etc., destroyed by the Portuguese (Part 1)," unpublished paper presented at a seminar on the "Portuguese Encounter" convened by the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon branch) on July 4, 2004
- 24. Ibid.
- 25. Vimalananda, Tennakoon, Buddhism in Ceylon xxxii.
- 26. Queyroz, Fernao de, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon (translated by Father S. G. Perera), vol. II (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992), 714-719
- 27. Abeysinghe, Tikiri, Portuguese Rule, 207
- 28. Peiris, P. E., The Portuguese Era, vol. II, 118-166
- 29. Trindade, Fr. Paulo da, The Spiritual Conquest of the East, quoted in O.M. de Silva Cosme, Fidalgos in the Kingdom of Kottte (1505-1656), 359
- 30. Peiris, P. E. quoted in Malalasekera, G. P., The Pali Literature of Ceylon, 265
- 31. Malalasekera, G. P., The Pali Literature of Ceylon, 265-266
- 32. De Barros, Joan, and Do Couto, Diogo, The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 AD, (translated and edited by Donald Ferguson), Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), 1908 Vol. XX (No. 60)
- 33. Abeysinghe, Tikiri, Portuguese Rule, 212
- 34. Ibid.
- 35. Queyroz, Fernao de, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, vol. II, 720
- 36. De Silva Cosme, O. M., Fidalgos in the Kingdom of Kottte (1505-1656), 361
- 37. Ibid.
- 38. Ibid.
- 39. Abeysinghe, Tikiri, Portuguese Rule, 208
- 40. Ibid.

- 41. Ibid., 209
- 42. Ibid., 208
- 43. De Silva Cosme, O. M., Fidalgos in the Kingdom of Kottte (1505-1656), 335
- 44. Peiris, P. E., *Portugal in Ceylon 1505-1658* (Cambridge: Heffers, 1937), 8-9
- 45. Peiris, P. E., *The Prince Vijaya Pala of Ceylon*, Appendix: Document 12, Correspondence of Prince Vijaya Pala to the Viceroy dated May 1, 1643 (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995), 31
- 46. Ibid., Appendix: Document 2, Correspondence of Prince Vijaya Pala to the Viceroy dated October 2, 1635, 19
- 47. Ibid., 15
- 48. Ibid., Appendix: Document 18, "True Account of the Baptism of Don Theodosio," 42-50
- 49. Ibid., Appendix: Document 22, Correspondence of the King of Portugal to the Viceroy dated January 31, 1651, 60
- 50. Ibid., 50
- 51. Ribeiro, Joao, *The Historical Tragedy of the Island of Ceilao* (translated by P.E. Peiris) (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1999), 130
- 52. BBC News, Sunday, 12 March 2000, URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/europe/674246.stm.
- 53. www.acts2.com/thebibletruth/Papal\_Apolologies\_China.htm. [This link no longer seems to be working; however, the main points of the Pope's apologies can be found at:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1618355.stm www.hsstudyc.org.hk/Webpage/Tripod/T137/T137\_E04.htm Eds.]

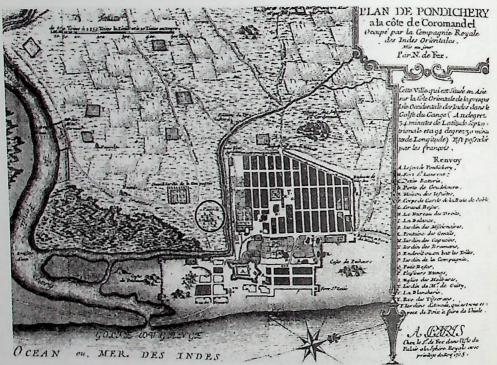
# PUDUCHERRY'S VEDAPURISWARAN TEMPLE

### Sita Ram Goel

While the Inquisition existed only at Goa, other forms of aggression by Christianity against a culture which had never harmed or opposed it took place elsewhere in India. One compelling example comes from Puducherry,\* where the French Jesuits worked hard to destroy the temple of Vedapuriswaran, and eventually succeeded. We reproduce below extracts from History of Hindu-Christian Encounters\*\* by the late historian Sita Ram Goel.

The following account of what the Christians did to Hindus in Pondicherry has been taken from the Diary maintained by Ananda Ranga Pillai, scion of a Tamil merchant family from Madras. His family along with several others had migrated to Pondicherry at the invitation of the French who occupied that town as the headquarters of their possessions in India. These families had brought considerable prosperity to it. Pillai was appointed Chief Dubash [interpreter] towards the end of 1747, five years after M. Dupleix became the Governor of Pondicherry. He held the post till 1756, two years after

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Puducherry" is the new official name of Pondicherry. We have, however, retained Sita Ram Goel's older spelling throughout. (Eds.) 
\*\* Sita Ram Goel, History of Hindu-Christian Encounters (AD 304 to 1996) 
(New Delhi: Voice of India, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1996; ch. 7, from which these extracts are drawn, is titled "Encounter at Pondicherry.") Sita Ram Goel authored several other important studies, all published by Voice of India, notably: St. Francis Xavier: the Man and his Mission (1985); Papacy: Its Doctrine and History (1986); Catholic Ashrams: Sannyasins or Swindlers? (1988); Jesus Christ: an Artifice for Aggression (1994); Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them (1997, editor for vol. 1 & author for vol. 2). (Eds.)



This map drawn in 1705 bears the caption: "Plan of Pondicherry on the Coromandel coast, occupied by the Royal Company of East India, updated by N. de Fer." It shows (inside the added circle)
Puducherry's "Pagoda," an old term for a Hindu temple—
in this case, the Vedapurishwaran temple.

Dupleix's departure.\* He had, however, kept an account of what he saw and heard since September 1736. His Diary which was written in Tamil continued till 1761 when he died.

The editor of the translation in English writes as follows regarding the treatment of Hindus in Pondicherry: "The religious policy pursued in the early part of the century at Pondicherry is remarkable. It appears to have been ordered that no temple should be repaired; Nainiyappau was ordered to be converted within six months under pain of losing his post as Chief Dubash; Hindu festivals were prohibited on Sundays

<sup>\*</sup> Joseph Dupleix was recalled to France in 1754.

and the principal Christian feasts; even when these regulations had caused the greater part of the town to be deserted, the Jesuits urged that a temple should be pulled down instead of conciliatory measures being employed. (*Registre des délibérations du Conseil souverain*, i, pp.125, 140, 142, 153 etc. This valuable collection of documents is being printed by the "Societé de l'Histoire de l'Inde française" at Pondicherry.) It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in this zealous proselytising policy lies one reason why Pondicherry was far inferior to Madras as a commercial centre; and perhaps the same cause also contributed to the absolute failure of Dupleix's efforts to induce the Madras merchants to settle under the French."

The Vedapuri Iswaran Temple was the principal place of worship for the Hindus of Pondicherry. The Jesuit missionaries built the Church of St. Paul adjacent to it and obtained an order from the King of France that the Hindu temple should be destroyed. It could not be done due to strong resistance from the Hindus who constituted the most important native community in the town. Pillai gives an account of how the temple was desecrated repeatedly by the Jesuits and finally destroyed with active help from the French establishment, particularly Madame Dupleix.\*

The first incident at the Vedapuri Temple took place on March 17, 1746. "On Wednesday night at 11," writes Pillai, "two unknown persons entered the Iswaran temple carrying in a vessel of liquid filth, which they poured on the heads of the gods around the altar, and into the temple, through the drain of the shrine of Iswaran; and having broken the pot of dirt on the image of the god Nandi, they went away through a part of the building which had been demolished. Early this morning, when the Nambiyan and the servants of the temple, opening the main gate, entered, and saw the nuisance

<sup>\*</sup>Jeanne Dupleix, a Christian of mixed European and Indian descent, whom Dupleix married in 1741; she was strongly under the influence of the Jesuits. (Eds.)

which had been committed, they at once reported the matter to their superiors, and to the Mahanattars; and bringing them to the spot, showed them what had been done."<sup>2</sup>

As the report of this sacrilege spread, Hindus, "from the Brahman to the pariah," held a public meeting. The Governor, Dupleix, when he heard of it, sent his chief peon to disperse the meeting. The peon "struck a Chetti on the cheek" and ordered the people to go away. The people, however, defied the order and protested, "You better kill us all."<sup>3</sup>...

The next incident recorded by Pillai took place on December 31, 1746. "It was reported," he writes, "to-night at 7, that an earthen jar, filled with filth, was thrown from within the grounds of the Church of St. Paul, into the temple of Vedapuri Iswaran. It very nearly fell on the head of Sankara Aiyan, who was at the shrine of the god Pillaiyar, on his way round the temple, in the performance of religious duties. When the jar struck the ground, and broke to pieces, the stench emitted was unbearable."<sup>4</sup>...

(Ananda Ranga Pillai goes on to narrate how an inquiry was made which concluded that the jar had indeed been thrown as alleged and from the alleged source. Although the Governor was convinced, he took no action against the Jesuits of St. Paul's Church, doubtless under pressure from the Jesuits and from his wife.)

The Jesuits succeeded in destroying the temple in September 1748 when Pondicherry was besieged by the British and the bulk of the Hindu population had moved out of the town.\* "This morning," writes Pillai in his Diary for September 7, "tents were pitched round St. Paul's Church, and two hundred soldiers and a hundred sepoys were quartered there. The Governor [Dupleix], M. Paradis and others went thither and desired that a mortar might be mounted there. But they asked

<sup>\*</sup>The British steadily gained ground over the French in other parts of the South, and eventually captured and largely destroyed Puducherry in 1761, seven years after Dupleix's recall to France. (Eds.)

that the Iswaran temple should be pulled down. I think the Governor may have arranged (through Madame) for their help in certain Europe matters; so, as this is a time of war, there was much talk, a council was held, and the priests were told that the Iswaran temple would be demolished. The Governor then went home."<sup>5</sup>

Pillai was very unhappy when he heard the news, "The Governor," he wrote, "has dishonoured himself. Firstly, he has listened to his wife's words and allowed her to manage all affairs and give all orders. . . . The priests of St. Paul's Church have been trying for the last fifty years to pull down the Vedapuri Iswaran temple; former Governors said that this was the country of the Tamils, that they would earn dishonour if they interfered with the temple, that the merchants would cease to come here, and that the town would decay; they even set aside the king's order to demolish the temple; and their glory shone like the sun. But the Governor listens to his wife and has ordered the temple to be destroyed, thereby adding shame to his dishonour."

The temple was now doomed to destruction. "Yesterday," Pillai continued in his Diary of September 8, "200 soldiers, 60 or 70 troopers and sepoys were stationed at St. Paul's Church in view of the matter in hand. This morning, M. Gerbault (the Engineer), the priests with diggers, masons, coolies and others, 200 in all, with spades, pickaxes and whatever is needed to demolish walls, began to pull down the southern wall of the Vedapuri Iswaran temple and the outhouses. At once the temple managers, Brahmans and mendicants came and told me."

Pillai recollected how the Governor had been working to this end since his arrival. "Before M. Dupleix," he observed, "was made Governor, and when he was only a Councillor, all the Europeans and some Tamils used to say that if he became Governor, he would destroy the Iswaran temple. The saying has come to pass. Ever since his appointment, he has been seeking to do so, but he has had no opportunity. He tried to get Muttayya Pillai to do it in May or June 1743. But the latter

would not consent, though the Governor threatened to cut his ears off and beat him publicly and even to hang him."

He reflected on the situation that had been deliberately created by the Governor, taking advantage of the British invasion. "The Governor," he wrote, "allowed the Brahmans to depart, because ten or twenty of them might be bold enough to suffer death, and because he suspected them of being spies; but he ordered that those who went should not be readmitted, thus taking advantage of the war to get rid of the Brahmans, though other caste people might return. So all, both men and women, had departed. Besides, he has posted soldiers to frighten away even fifty or a hundred persons, should so many come to speak on behalf of the Brahmans. The four gates of the Fort have been closed by reason of the troubles; and he has ordered the destruction of the temple. What can we do? There are not even ten of the heads of castes to assemble and speak. We can do nothing, because he has taken advantage of this time of war to accomplish his long-standing object and demolish the temple."8

So Pillai advised the Brahmans that "they could do nothing but remove the images and other things to the Kalahasti Iswaran temple." But they did not agree with him and said, "We will speak to the Governor about it, and tell him that if he insists, some of us will die and none will care to remain here." He told them that the Governor had made up his mind, that he was not likely to listen to them, that the temple was already being demolished, and that the only thing that could be done was to save the images and other sacred articles. "I heard just now," he said to them, "that the southern wall and the outhouses had been pulled down, and that they were demolishing the Arthamantapam and Mahamantapam. Don't delay. Remember how blindly matters are being driven on. The St. Paul's priests will send the European soldiers, Coffrees,\*

<sup>\*</sup> A contemptuous term for "black-skinned natives," derived from "Caffre" or "Kaffir" and originally applied to Black Africans. (Eds.)

Topasses, and even their parish converts with clubs into the temple to carry away, break and damage all they can. If you complain, they will only beat you. So you will lose not only the temple, but also the articles, the images used in the festivals, the Pillaiyar and all the other images. Anyone can do what he pleases here now, and there is no man to question him. Still worse is it in matters connected with our temples. By his wife's advice, M. Dupleix has accomplished what has been attempted in vain for the last fifty years. But now the time has come. I cannot describe the boundless joy of the St. Paul's priests, the Tamil and pariha converts, Madame Dupleix and M. Dupleix. In their delight, they will surely enter the temple, and will not depart, without breaking and trampling underfoot the idols and destroying all they can. So go quickly and remove all the articles."<sup>10</sup>

More news came in quick succession. "Just then," proceeds Pillai, "news was brought that Father Coeurdoux, the Superior of St. Paul's Church, had kicked the inner shrine with his foot, and had ordered the Coffrees to remove the doors, and the Christians to break the Vahanams." He now went to the Governor, hoping that the latter would himself mention the subject. But the Governor did not, as if he was unaware of what was being done. Some ten heads of castes also arrived and "salaamed the Governor." The Governor did not talk to them directly but asked Varlam, a native Christian, to find from them what they wanted. Varlam told him that "they sought his permission to remove the articles from the temple which was being destroyed." The Governor "gave them the permission but told the peons to beat and disperse the crowd." 12

The Governor's permission, however, served no purpose. Pillai records:

"I heard that the priests of St. Paul's Church told the Coffrees, soldiers and pariahs to beat the heads of castes when they went to the temple to remove their articles. They were scarcely suffered to approach the temple, and when they were removing the Vahanams, shoulder-poles and temple documents,

each man was beaten twenty or thirty times. It was with extreme difficulty that they rescued the idols used in the processions and the Pillaiyar.

"Then Father Coeurdoux of Karikal came with a great hammer, kicked the lingam, broke it with his hammer, and ordered the Coffrees and the Europeans to break the images of Vishnu and the other gods. Madame went and told the priest that he might break the idols as he pleased. He answered that she had accomplished what had been impossible for fifty years, that she must be one of those Mahatmas who established this religion [Christianity] in old days, and that he would publish her fame throughout the world. So saying he dismissed them.

"Then Varlam also kicked the great lingam nine or ten times with his sandals in the presence of Madame and priest, and spat on it, out of gladness, and hoping that the priest and Madame would regard him also as a Mahatma. Then he followed Madame. I can neither write nor describe what abominations were done in the temple. I know not what fruit they will reap. All the Tamils think that the end of the world has come. The priests, the Tamil Christians, the Governor and his wife are more delighted than they have ever been before, but they have not yet considered what will befall them in future." 13

Pillai learnt later on that "the temple had been levelled with the ground and that the whole people were troubled at heart." He reflected, "The wise men will say that the glory of an image is as short-lived as human happiness. The temple was destined to remain glorious till now, but now has fallen."<sup>14\*</sup>

### क्ष ज

<sup>\*</sup> Naturally, the temple was not allowed to be rebuilt and its vast site was promptly encroached upon. In a letter (in French) of 20 December 1952 to historian Yvonne Gaebelé, Frère L. Faucheux wrote: "The map of Pondicherry made by de Fer and published in 1705 [reproduced with this article], placed the Vedapurisvara Pagoda at the east end of today's

### References

- The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai translated from Tamil by Rev. J. Frederick Price and K. Rangachari, Madras, 1904, Volume IV, p. 144, Footnote.
- 2. Ibid., Volume I, p. 332.
- 3. Ibid., p. 333.
- 4. Ibid., Volume III, p. 220.
- 5. Ibid., Volume V, pp. 295-96.
- 6. Ibid., p. 297.
- 7. Ibid., pp. 229-300.
- 8. Ibid., pp. 301-02.
- 9. Ibid., p. 302.
- 10. Ibid., p. 306.
- 11. Ibid., p. 307.
- 12. Ibid., p. 308.
- 13. Ibid., pp. 310-311.
- 14. Ibid., p. 312.

Nida-Rajappa-Ayyer Street. I presume that all the land east of the missionaries' cemetery, the land of the Mission's printing press, and the stretch of the Missions Étrangères Street contiguous to them, belonged to it. The pond of the Pagoda took up almost all the land between the Missions Étrangères Street, the continuation of Nida-Rajappa-Ayyer Street, and the compound of the sisters of Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague. Its southern part encroached on half the breadth of Saint-Ange Street." (Eds.)

# THE CAREER OF PROSELYTISM

#### Abbé J. A. Bubois

Abbé Dubois, a French Jesuit missionary, came to India in 1792; he was first attached to the Pondicherry Mission, then travelled all over the South, adopting Hindu clothes and habits, and settling in Mysore before leaving India in 1823. Back in Paris, he was made the director of the Missions Étrangères; he passed away in 1848. He is famous for his Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies (see the following box item). In a lesser known work, Letters on the State of Christianity in India, published in 1823,\* he explained at length to a few Christian friends and missionaries his conviction that "the conversion of the Hindoos is impracticable" — a surprising admission coming from a fervent proselytizer.

Below are a few extracts, dating from 1815-16. They contain honest confessions, but also explain in fascinating detail the devious methods recommended by Dubois to enable the missionaries to "insinuate themselves" into the pagans' confidence, and the systematic demonization of Hinduism that had by then become standard practice.

... The question to be considered may be reduced to these two points: First, is there a possibility of making real converts to Christianity among the natives in India? Secondly, Are the means employed for that purpose, and above all, the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the idioms of the country, likely to conduce to this desirable object?

To both interrogatories I will answer in the negative : it is

<sup>\*</sup>Letters on the State of Christianity in India (London: 1823, reprinted New Delhi: Asia Educational Services, 1995). We have kept the original spelling throughout. The title, drawn from the text, is ours. (Eds.)

my decided opinion, first, that under existing circumstances there is no human possibility of converting the Hindoos, to any sect of christianity, and, secondly, that the translation of the Holy Scriptures circulated among them, so far from conducing to this end, will, on the contrary, increase the prejudices of the natives against the christian religion, and prove in many respects detrimental to it. These assertions, coming from a person of my profession, may to many appear bold and extraordinary; I will therefore support them by such arguments and proofs as a long experience and practice in the career of proselytism have enabled me to adduce.

Before I go farther, it will not be amiss to say a few words about the manner in which the christian religion was first brought into the country; and on the industry with which its interests were managed by the first preachers.

The christian religion of the catholic persuasion was introduced into India a little more than three hundred years ago; at the epoch of the Portuguese invasions. One of the first missionaries was the famous St. Francis Xavier, a Spanish jesuit of the greatest merit, and animated with a truly apostolical zeal, and still known under the appellation of the *apostle of India*. He traversed several provinces of India, and is said to have made many thousand converts, at a period when the prejudices of the natives against the christian religion were far from reaching the height they have since attained. The cast of fishermen at Cape Comorin, who are all christians, still pride themselves in being the offspring of the first proselytes made by that apostle.

Xavier soon discovered in the manners and prejudices of the natives an insurmountable bar to the progress of christianity among them, as appears from the printed letters still extant, which he wrote to St. Ignatius de Loyola, his superior, and the founder of the order of the jesuits.

At last Francis Xavier, entirely disheartened by the invincible obstacles he everywhere met in his apostolic career, and by the apparent impossibility of making real converts, left the

country in disgust, after a stay in it of only two or three years; and he embarked for Japan, where his spiritual labours were crowned with far greater success, and laid the foundation of those once numerous and flourishing congregations of Japanese christians, who, within a period of less than a century, amounted to more than a million of souls. At this time their daily-increasing numbers threatening to supplant the religion of the country, awakened the jealousy and alarm of the [Buddhist] Bonzes and other directors of the popular faith, and gave rise to one of the severest persecutions\* ever recorded in the annals of christianity, and which ended in the total extermination of the christians. After an interval of nearly two hundred years, this spirit of intolerance and persecution is still continued, as appears from the conduct observed to this day by the Japanese government towards the Europeans trading to the shores, and from some other circumstances.

The disappointment and want of success of Xavier ought to have been sufficient to damp the most fervent zeal of the persons disposed to enter the same career. When a man of his temper, talents, and virtues, had been baffled in all his endeavours to introduce christianity into India, his successors could scarcely flatter themselves with the hope of being more fortunate. However, this was not the case. His jesuit brethren in Europe were not to be deterred by difficulties or contradictions in undertaking, where the cause of religion was at stake. In consequence, jesuits were sent from every catholic country to India, to forward the interest of the gospel.

By degrees those missionaries introduced themselves into the inland country. They saw that in order to fix the attention of these people, gain their confidence, and get a hearing, it was indispensably necessary to respect their prejudices, and even to conform to their dress, their manner of living, and

<sup>\*</sup>A classic choice of words, common to missionaries and colonialists: aggressions committed by them, including slaughters, are "holy," while any resistance by natives amounts to "intolerance" and "persecution."

forms of society; in short, scrupulously to adopt the costumes and practices of the country.

With this persuasion, they at their first outset announced themselves as European Brahmins come from a distance of five thousand leagues from the western parts of the *Djamboody*,\* for the double purpose of imparting and receiving knowledge from their brother Brahmins in India. Almost all these first missionaries were more or less acquainted with astronomy or medicine; the two sciences best calculated to ingratiate them with the natives of every description.

After announcing themselves as Brahmins,\*\* they made it their study to imitate that tribe: they put on a Hindoo dress of cavy, or yellow colour, the same as that used by the Indian religious teachers and penitents; they made frequent ablutions; whenever they showed themselves in public they applied to their forehead paste, made of sandal wood, as used by the Brahmins. They scrupulously abstained from every kind of animal food, as well as from intoxicating liquors, entirely faring like Brahmins on vegetables and milk; in a word, after the example of St. Paul (1 *Cor.* ix.20-21) "Unto the Jews, they became as Jews, that they might gain the Jews; to them that were without law, as without law. They were made all things to all men, that they might by all means save some." It was by such a life of almost incredible privations and restraints, that they insinuated themselves among these people.

Fully aware of the unalterable attachment of the natives to their own usages and practices, they made it their principal study not to hurt their feelings, by attacking all at once the superstitions with which most of their customs are infested: they judged it more prudent at the beginning to overlook many of them, and wait for a more favourable time, to put

<sup>\*</sup> Jambudweepa, an ancient (mostly Puranic) name of India, which Dubois may have thought to mean the Arabian sea. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup>It is rather ironical that missionaries (including Dubois, as further passages will show), who are so fond of demonizing Brahmins, should feel compelled to introduce themselves as such. (Eds.)

the converts right on the subject. Their colour, their talents, their virtues, above all, their perfect disinterestedness, rendered them acceptable even to the Hindoo princes, who, astonished at the novelty and singularity of the circumstance, bestowed their protection on these extraordinary men, and gave them full freedom to preach their religion, and make proselytes to it.

The jesuits began their work under these favourable auspices, and made a great number of converts among all castes of Hindoos, in those countries where they were allowed the free exercise of their religious functions. It appears from authentic lists, made up about seventy years ago, which I have seen, that the number of native christians in these countries was as follows, vis. in the Marawa about 30,000, in the Madura above 100,000, in the Carnatic 80,000, in Mysore 35,000. At the present time hardly a third of this number is to be found in these districts respectively. I have heard that the number of converts was still much more considerable on the other coast, from Goa to Cape Comorin; but of these I never saw authentic lists.

Things were carrying on in this promising manner by the jesuit missionaries, when severe complaints were preferred against them from several parts to the Holy See at Rome. The accusers were chiefly friars of other religious orders, settled at Goa and Pondicherry, who accused the Jesuits of the most culpable indulgence, in tolerating and winking at all kinds of idolatrous superstitions among their proselytes, and with having themselves rather become converts to the idolatrous worship of the Hindoo, by conforming to many of their practices and superstitions, than making Indians converts to the christian religion.

The charges had some degree of foundation, though not to the extent set forth by the accusers, whose representations seem on the whole to have proceeded rather from motives of envy and jealousy against the jesuits, than from a true disinterested zeal for the cause of religion.

Those often-repeated accusations gave rise to a long and warm correspondence between the parties concerned, in which the jesuits, in giving an account of their conduct to the Holy See, did not conceal that, from motives of prudence, and not to risk the revolt of the converts, and prejudice the pagans more and more against the new religion, they had been under the very unpleasant necessity of overlooking many reprehensible practices, waiting for fitter circumstances to suppress them gradually.\* At the same time they exposed the dangers which could not fail to ensue, if the feelings of the Hindoos were all at once hurt on this extremely delicate point, and the practices justly complained of, openly opposed and reprobated, before the christian religion had gained a solid footing in the country. . . .

All these and many other like reasons appeared to the Holy See futile and merely evasive; and the jesuits were peremptorily ordered to preach the catholic religion in all its purity, and altogether suppress the superstitious practices, till then tolerated among the Neophites.\*\*

The jesuits, seeing that their following such directions would not only put a stop to all further conversions, but also occasion the apostacy\*\*\* of a great many proselytes, before they gave up their point, sent deputations to Rome, in order to enlighten the Holy See on the subject. This disgusting contest, which was carried on in several instances with much acrimony, lasted more than forty years before it came to an end.

At length the reigning Pope, wishing to finish the business, sent Cardinal de Tournon to India with the title of apostolic

<sup>\*</sup> The same strategy was adopted by Jesuits in China; much of Dubois' following analysis confirms K. M. Panikkar's own, see the latter's article earlier in this Part 3. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Now spelt "neophyte," meaning in this case a new convert to Christianity. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Now spelt "apostasy," i.e. the giving up of one's faith — in the present case, the return of Christian converts to Hinduism; one who does this is an "apostate" or a "relapsed heretic." (Eds.)

legate, to make personal enquiries on the subject, and report all the details to the Holy See. The cardinal landed at Pondicherry about a century ago, and on his arrival sent for some of the principal missionaries, living in the inland country, had all matters minutely investigated, and made his report to the Pope. After some further delay, the famous and very learned Benedict XIV, having been raised to the papal chair, and wishing to put at once a stop to this scandalous contest, issued a very rigorous bull or decree in several articles, by which he formally and expressly condemned and reprobated all the superstitious practices (a list of which was contained in the instrument), till then tolerated by the missionaries, and required that the whole of them, of whatever order or dignity they might by, should bind themselves by a solemn oath taken before a bishop, to conform themselves without any tergiversation whatever to the spirit and letter of the decree; it was moreover ordered, that the decree should be read and published every Sunday in all churches and chapels in the presence of the congregation, and a promise of submission to it be required from all converts.

These orders were reluctantly complied with: but what the jesuits had foreseen happened: a great number of proselytes preferred renouncing the new religion to abandoning their practices. A stop was put to conversions; and the christian religion began to become odious to the Hindoos on account of its intolerance.

At that very time happened the European invasion, and the bloody contests for dominion between the English and French. The Europeans, till then almost entirely unknown to the natives in the interior, introduced themselves in several ways and under various denominations into every part of the country. The Hindoos soon found that those missionaries, whom their colour, their talents, and other qualities, had induced them to regard as such extraordinary beings, as men coming from another world, were in fact nothing else but disguised *Fringy* (Europeans); and that their country, their religion, and

original education, were the same with those of the vile, the contemptible Fringy,\* who had of late invaded their country. This event proved the last blow to the interests of the christian religion. No more conversions were made; apostacy became almost general in several quarters; and christianity became more and more an object of contempt and aversion, in proportion as the European manners became better known to the Hindoos.

Nearly at that period the suppression of the order of the jesuits took place in Europe; and there being no longer a sufficient number of missionaries, a national black clergy was formed, and the attendance on the remaining congregations entrusted to their care. Those native missionaries not having the advantage of a proper education, and many amongst them shewing themselves more attached to their own interests than to those of religion, enjoy but little consideration even among their flocks, and none among the natives of any other description.

Such is the abridged history of the rise, the progress, and the decline of the christian religion in India. The low state to which it is now reduced, and the contempt in which it is held, cannot be surpassed. There is not at present in the country (as mentioned before) more than a third of the christians who were to be found in it eighty years ago, and this number diminishes every day by frequent apostacy. It will dwindle to nothing in a short period; and if things continue as they are now going on, within less than fifty years there will, I fear remain no vestige of christianity among the natives.

The christian religion, which was formerly an object of indifference, or at most of contempt, is at present become, I will venture to say, almost an object of horror. It is certain that during the last sixty years no proselytes or but a very few

<sup>\*</sup> Fringy, is the appellation under which the Europeans are designated by the natives of India; it is derived from the term Frank, and has been introduced by the Mahometans. (Dubois's note; the more common spelling is feringhi or feringhee, in Persian farangi. Eds.)

have been made. Those christians who are still to be met with in several parts of the country, and whose numbers (as I have just mentioned), diminishes every day, are the offspring of the converts made by the jesuits before that period. The very small number of proselytes who are still gained over from time to time, are found among the lowest tribes; so are individuals who, driven out from their castes, on account of their vices or scandalous transgressions of their usages, are shunned afterwards by everybody as outlawed men, and have no other resource left than that of turning christians, in order to form new connexions in society; and you will easily fancy that such an assemblage of the offals and dregs of society only tends to increase the contempt and aversion entertained by the Hindoos against christianity.

In fact, how can our holy religion prosper amidst so many insurmountable obstacles? A person who embraces it becomes a proscribed and outlawed man; he loses at once all that can attach him to life. A husband, a father is forthwith forsaken and deserted by his own wife and children, who obstinately refuse to have any further intercourse with their degraded relative. A son is unmercifully driven out of his paternal mansion, and entirely deserted by those who gave him birth.

By embracing the christian religion, therefore, a Hindoo loses his all. Relations, kindred, friends — all desert him! Goods, possessions, inheritance, all disappear!

Where is the man furnished with a sufficient stock of cynical fortitude to be able to bear such severe trials?

The very name of christian carries along with it the stain of infamy; and the proposal alone to become a convert to christianity is considered by every well-bred Hindoo as a very serious insult, which is instantly resented, as I have witnessed in repeated instances. Such a proposal must always be made with the greatest prudence and circumspection, in order not to be exposed to severe reproof from those to whom it is addressed.

Fully aware of the dispositions of the Hindoos in this respect, and that forced religious controversies with them can answer no good purpose, and generally produces but bad effects, I have always made it my rule, in the visits I from time to time receive from pagans of every caste, when visiting my several congregations, never to obtrude myself upon them on religious subjects, unless urged by them, which is often the case; a great many among them being fond of discoursing upon religion; some from motives of curiosity, but a greater number from vanity, and to have an opportunity of making a display of their pretended learning, as well as of becoming acquainted with the learning and mental resources of their opponents.

When attacked on this subject, the necessity of standing on the defensive obliges me to enter into discussions, and set forth the excellence of the christian religion, over the absurdities of paganism; employing for this purpose such short, plain, and simple reasoning, as may be within the comprehension of my hearers; for deep and learned arguments could not be understood by them.

On such occasions, when the arguments of my opponents in vindication of their own religion are exhausted, and they have nothing more to say, they rarely fail to conclude and sum up their reasoning by this solemn and, in their mind, unanswerable appeal, exclaiming with much exultation and emphasis, "After all, your religion is the religion of the *Fringy*;" refraining, however from a feeling of respect, or perhaps from motives of prudence, from adding, in my presence, the second part of this forcible sentence, viz. "and all that comes from so impure a source must be radically bad."

In the meantime, when compelled to sustain religious disputes with pagans, I am far from imitating the forbidding and provoking conduct of some uncivil and intolerant persons of my profession, who, instigated by a warm, a false, and in many instances a perilous zeal, on their first outset, when disputing upon religion with the heathen, begin their arguments with

these opprobrious and insulting phrases, "All your gods are nothing but demons; you all will go to hell to expiate in eternal flames the crime of your idolatry;"\* and such like vituperative language. Such a strain of abuse and insult only tends, as may be expected, to provoke a return of blasphemous expressions against the christian religion and its divine author; and to render christianity itself, its teachers, and its followers, more and more odious to the natives.

In my religious controversy I never forget the decorum, calmness, forbearance, and mutual regard that ought ever to be observed in such circumstances, carefully avoiding all that could to no good purpose wound the feelings and prejudices of my opponents; and if I reap no other fruit from my trouble, but their reluctant assent to my simple arguments, I can at least pride myself, that on such occasions I get a patient and cheerful hearing, and that both my opponents and myself separate on good terms, satisfied with the mutual respect with which the dispute was carried on. But to return.

The christian religion is at the present time become so odious, that in several parts of the country a Hindoo, who should happen to have friends or connexions among the natives professing this religion, would not dare to own it in public, as he would be exposed to severe reproof for holding a familiar intercourse with (in their opinion) people so degraded.

Such is the state of degradation to which christianity has been reduced in these latter times, and which must be imputed in a great degree to the immoral and irregular conduct of many Europeans in every part of the country.

Besides the christians of the catholic persuasion, there are still existing in some parts of the country small congregations of the Lutheran sect; but they are held, if possible, in a still higher degree of contempt than the former. ...

<sup>\*</sup>A fine summary of the thinking of the vast majority of missionaries, even today, whether they express it openly or not — and they often do. (Eds.)

... When I was at Vellore, four years ago, in attendance on a numerous congregation living in that place, having been informed that the Lutheran missionaries kept a *catechist* or native religious teacher at that station, on a salary of five pagodas a month, I was led to suppose that they had a numerous flock there; but I was not a little surprised when, on enquiry, I found that the whole congregation consisted of only three individuals, namely, a drummer, a cook, and a horse-keeper.

In the meantime, do not suppose that those thin congregations are wholly composed of converted pagans; at least half consists of catholic apostates, who went over to the Lutheran sect in times of famine, or from other interested motives.

It is not uncommon on the coast to see natives who successively pass from one religion to another, according to their actual interest. In my last journey to Madras, I became acquainted with natives converts who regularly changed their religion twice a year, and who for a long while were in the habit of being six months catholic, and six months protestant.

Besides the Lutheran sect, the Moravian brethren\* sent also missionaries to India, about seventy years ago, to make proselytes to their own persuasion. But on their first arrival in the country, they were so much amazed and appalled at the insurmountable difficulties to be met with everywhere, and so satisfied of the impossibility of making true converts to christianity among a people circumstanced as the Hindoos were, that very wisely they dropped their design without even making the attempt. They afterwards tried to convert the savage of the Nicobar Islands, but without success; at last, after lingering at Trankbar [Tranquebar], where they had formed their principal establishment, during a period of nearly sixty years, and where I had the pleasure to pay them frequent visits when at that place in 1793, they were all recalled home about

<sup>\*</sup>The Moravian church is a Protestant sect founded in the eighteenth century, close to the Lutheran. (Eds.)

twenty years ago, and this sect no longer exists in India.

Respecting the new missionaries of several sects, who have of late years made their appearance in the country, you may rest assured, as far as my information on the subject goes, that notwithstanding the pompous reports made by several among them, all their endeavours to make converts have till now proved abortive, and that their successes are only to be seen on paper.

The sect of the Nestorians\* in Travancore is generally known. ... The fact is, that this sect, a colony of whom is supposed by some authors to have introduced itself into the Travancore country about the end of the eighth century, when Nestorianism was violently persecuted in Persia, once amounted to more than 100,000 (Gibbon says to 200,000 individuals). The jesuits, on their first arrival in India, hearing of them, in one way or another converted the greatest part to the catholic faith. Their liturgy is to this day in the Syrian language, and in the performance of their religious ceremonies they use this ancient dead tongue. There remains still among them large congregations, consisting of 70 or 80,000 christians, of whom two-thirds are catholics, and a third Nestorians. They are all designated under the contemptuous name of Nazarany, and held by the pagans in still greater contempt than the christians of this part of the country. The Nairs chiefly keep them at the greatest distance, and they form a separate body in society....

After having given you this explanation I will resume my subject, and show that the naked text of the Bible, exhibited without a long previous preparation to the Hindoos, must

<sup>\*</sup> Members of an early, "heretical" Christian sect which rejected Mary's status as "Mother of God" and regarded Jesus as having two natures, one human and one divine. It was suppressed from the fifth century AD onward. The Syriac Christians partly derived from this movement, which explains that Catholic or Protestant missionaries regarded those of burned their books. (Eds.)

prove detrimental to the christian religion, and increase their aversion to it, inasmuch as this sacred book contains in almost every page accounts which cannot fail deeply to wound their feelings, by openly hurting prejudices which are held most sacred.

To you who have some acquaintance with the education and customs of the Hindoos, I will put the following simple questions:

What will a well-bred native think, when, in reading over this holy book, he sees that Abraham, after receiving the visit of three angels under a human shape, entertains his guest by causing a calf to be killed, and served to them for their fare? The prejudiced Hindoo will at once judge that both Abraham and his heavenly guests were nothing but vile pariahs; and, without further reading, he will forthwith throw away the book, containing (in his opinions), such sacrilegious accounts.

What will a Brahmin say, when he peruses the details of the bloody sacrifices prescribed in the mosaical law in the worship of the true God? He will assuredly declare, that the god who could be pleased with the shedding of the blood of so many victims immolated to his honour, must undoubtedly be a deity of the same kind (far be from me the blasphemy) as the mischievous Hindoo deities, Cohly [Kali], Mahry [Mariamman?], Darma-Rajah [Dharmaraja or Yama], and other infernal gods, whose wrath cannot be appeased but by the shedding of blood, and the immolating of living victims.

But, above all, what will a Brahmin or any other well-bred Hindoo think, when he peruses in our holy books the account of the immolating of creatures held most sacred by him? What will be his feelings, when he sees that the immolating of oxen and bulls constituted a leading feature in the religious ordinances of the Israelites, and that the blood of those most sacred animals was almost daily shed at the shrine of the god they adored? What will be his feelings when he sees, that after Solomon had at immense expense and labour built a magnificent temple in honour of the true God, he made the *pratista* 

or consecration of it, by causing 22,000 oxen to be slaughtered, and overflowing his new temple with the blood of these sacred victims? He will certainly in perusing accounts (in his opinion so horribly sacrilegious), shudder, and be seized with the liveliest horror, look on the book containing such shocking details as an abominable work (far be from me, once more, the blasphemy, I am expressing the feelings of a prejudiced Pagan), throw it away with indignation, consider himself as polluted for having touched it, go immediately to the river for the purpose of purifying himself by ablutions from the defilement he thinks he has contracted, and before he again enters his house, he will send for a Poorohita Brahmin to perform the requisite ceremonies for purifying it from the defilement it has contracted, by ignorantly keeping within its walls so polluted a thing as the Bible.

In the meanwhile he will become more and more confirmed in the idea, that a religion which derives its tenets from so *impure* a source is altogether detestable, and that those who profess it, must be the basest and vilest of men.

Such are the effects which, in my humble opinion, the reading of the naked text of the Bible cannot fail to produce on the unprepared minds of the prejudiced Hindoos.  $\dots$ <sup>1</sup>

#### OB

The Hindoos may be divided into two classes — the impostors, and the dupes. The latter include the bulk of the population of India; and the former is composed of the whole tribe of Brahmins. Now, in a society composed of such materials, we can entertain but very faint hopes of improving the interests, or extending the benefits of the Christian religion.

The Brahmins, in framing their system of imposture, and in devising the monstrous worship prevailing all over India, not only used every artifice in their power to adapt it to the dispositions of a simple and credulous people, but, above all, they employed all possible means to establish in this way, in

a permanent and indisputable manner, the high power and uncontroverted control they have always exercised over the other tribes. In order that their artifice in establishing throughout the body of society the most downright imposture which ever prevailed among any nation on the earth, might not be questioned, they had the precaution to incumber the people with those numberless institutions, which, at the same time that they secure the permanent superiority of the Brahmins, render the other tribes incapable of reasoning, or of any mental exertion which might enable them to emerge from that state of intellectual degradation in which they are held by their unchangeable usages and customs. . . .

In no country in the world has the Christian religion had to encounter the stupendous obstacles that are to be met with in India. In no country was the struggle so desperate; in none had it to deal with a people so completely priest-ridden; in none had it to oppose a system of cunning and priestcraft so deep laid, and so well calculated to baffle all the attempts of that divine religion to gain a solid footing; but, above all, in no country had it to encounter any difficulty resembling that baneful division of the people into castes which (whatever may be its advantages in other respects) has always proved, and will ever prove, an insurmountable bar to its progress. . . .

A Hindoo, and above all, a Brahmin, by his institutions, his usages, his education and customs, must be considered as a kind of moral monster, as an individual placed in a state of continual variance and opposition with the rest of the human race; as a being sequestrated from mankind, with whom he is forbidden all free and confidential intercourse, nay, whom he is obliged to shun, to scorn, and to hate. The crafty Brahmins (in order that the system of imposture that establishes their unmolested superiority over the other tribes, and brings the latter under their uncontrolled bondage, might in no way be discovered or questioned), had the foresight to draw up between the Hindoos and the other nations on earth an impassable, an impregnable line, that defies all attacks from

foreigners. There is no opening to approach them, and they themselves are strictly, and under the severest penalties, precluded from access to anybody for the purpose of improving themselves, and bettering their actual condition, than which, as they are firmly and universally persuaded, nothing on the earth is more perfect.

On the other hand, it will be acknowledged, I believe, by every unbiased observer, that as long as we are unable to make impression on the polished part of the nation, on the leaders of public opinion, on the body of Brahmins in short, there remain but very faint hopes of propagating Christianity among the Hindoos; and as long as the only result of our labours shall be, as is at present the case, to bring into our respective communions here and there a few desperate vagrants, outcasts, pariah, horse-keepers, beggars, and other persons of the lowest description, the impression made on the public mind cannot fail to be unfavourable, and detrimental to the interests of Christianity among a people who, in all circumstances, are ruled by the force of custom and example, and are in no case allowed to judge for themselves. . . . \*

I have already given an imperfect description of the Hindoo Brahmin by representing him as a kind of moral monster in the social order; as a being whose institutions are generally a deviation from the order of nature, and who has nothing to do with the rest of mankind, from whom he has entirely insulated himself.

The leading feature of the education of a Christian, is an universal charity and benevolence towards all his fellow-creatures.

The leading feature of the education of a Brahmin is an universal hatred and contempt towards all the human race.

<sup>\*</sup> Dubois was, of course, deeply ignorant of Indian traditions of dialogue and intellectual debate, and had no access to Indian literatures (such as Sanskritic or Tamil), which abound in instances of free dissent — quite unlike Christianity's brutal suppression of "heresy." (Eds.)

A Christian is taught to love even his enemies, and to return good for evil.

A Brahmin is taught, if not positively to hate his friends, and to return evil for good, at least to conduct himself through life by quite selfish considerations, and to sacrifice all, without exception, to his private interests. . . .

It is, I believe, generally admitted, that the invasions and conquests which the Europeans, prompted by avarice and an unextinguishable thirst of dominion, have not ceased to make in the old and new world during the last three or four centuries, have, in most cases, proved rather a curse than a blessing, and have, on the whole, produced more evil than good. Not to speak of the flood of blood through which those conquests were made, and the European dominions established, the invaders, among many other evils, have supplied the savages with fermented poisonous liquors, with the use of which they were formerly unacquainted, and which have increased their natural ferocity to a considerable extent.

They [the Europeans] are become the general carriers, and almost the exclusive monopolists of the poisonous drug called opium, whose effects are to produce complete madness; and from an insatiable thirst for gain, they have shamelessly smuggled that poison all over Asia, in open violation of the wise prohibitions of the rulers of several countries to prevent so pernicious an article from being introduced into the states under their sway. They have had the horrid distinction of teaching the half-civilized people their infernal system of warfare, and supplied them with the most destructive kind of weapons, the more effectually to destroy each other. They have, in general, by their bad examples, polluted their minds, and vitiated the simplicity of their manners. They have poisoned their bodies by loathsome and incurable diseases, till then unknown to them; but, perhaps, with a few exceptions, they have to his day operated no material improvement in their morals or religion; on which points, the conquered are found to be, at present, rather in a worse condition than they

were when their fierce invaders, stepping over the immense barriers by which nature seemed to have separated them for ever, and violating their territories and their natural rights, made their first appearance among them.

During the long period I have been in India, I have visited places inhabited by Europeans of several nations, by English, French, Dutch, Danes, and Portuguese. In none of those places have I been able to remark any amelioration or improvement in the morals and religion of the natives. Any changes I have observed in this respect, were rather for the worse. If their intercourse with the Europeans has operated any alteration, it has been to prompt them to lay aside and disregard all that was good and justifiable in their usages, retaining all that is bad and exceptionable....

This circumstance may be distinctly noticed by every observer, who travels over the country. Let him go to the coast, or any other place inhabited by Europeans, he will find there the natives in general, selfish, arrogant, impertinent, impatient of control, obtrusive, insolent towards Europeans, ever ready to injure or insult them, when they think they may do so with impunity. . . .

Let the same person go into the inland country, or into places where the Europeans are not at all, or but little known, and he will in general find a people, shy it is true, but docile, peaceable, unassuming, submissive, serviceable, respectful to Europeans, and ready to render them service, whenever the latter betray nothing forbidding in their manners and behaviour.

So far from the intercourse of the Europeans with the natives making a favourable impression on the latter, on the score of religion, this very circumstance produces (as I mentioned in a former letter) a quite opposite effect.

On the whole, it is my decided opinion, that as long as we have no warmer promoters of the cause of Christianity than the existing race of Europeans or any nation whatever, we can entertain but very faint hopes of Christianity gaining ground in India. . . .

For my part, I cannot boast of my successes in this holy career during a period of twenty-five years that I have laboured to promote the interest of the Christian religion. The restraints and privations under which I have lived, by conforming myself to the usages of the country; embracing, in many respects, the prejudices of the natives; living like them, and becoming almost a Hindoo myself; in short, by "being made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," — all this has proved of no avail to me to make proselytes.

During the long period I have lived in India, in the capacity of a missionary, I have made, with the assistance of a native missionary, in all between two and three hundred converts of both sexes. Of this number two-thirds were pariahs, or beggars; and the rest were composed of sudras, vagrants, and outcasts of several tribes, who, being without resource, turned Christians, in order to form new connections, chiefly for the purpose of marriage, or with some other interested views. Among them are to be found some also who believed themselves to be possessed by the devil, and who turned Christians, after having been assured that on their receiving baptism the unclean spirits would leave them, never to return; and I will declare it, with shame and confusion, that I do not remember any one who may be said to have embraced Christianity from conviction, and through quite disinterested motives. Among these new converts many apostatised, and relapsed into Paganism, finding that the Christian religion did not afford them the temporal advantages they had looked for in embracing it; and I am verily ashamed, that the resolution I have taken to declare the whole truth on this subject forces me to make the humiliating avowal, that those who continued Christians are the very worst among my flock. ...

In fact, the conversion of the Hindoos, under existing circumstances, is so hopeless a thing, and their prejudices against it are so deeply rooted, and so decidedly declared, that I am firmly persuaded, that if (what has never been the

case) the Hindoo Brahmins were animated by a spirit of proselytism, and sent to Europe missionaries of their own faith, to propagate their monstrous religion, and make converts to the worship of Seeva [Shiva] and Vishnoo, they would have much more chance of success, among certain classes of society, than we have to make among them true converts to the faith in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

#### 80 CB

#### References

- 1. Letter I of 7 August 1815, pp. 1-31.
- 2. Letter III of 16 November 1816, pp. 87-136.

## **Demonizing India**

The East India Company, always on the lookout for what could firm up its hold on India, bought in 1807 from Abbé Dubois the manuscript of his *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, and published it in English ten years later, reprinting it frequently.\* The Company also paid for Dubois's return to France and offered him a special pension for life "in recognition of the many services he had rendered in India" (p. xxx). Indeed, in the dedication to his *Letters on the State of Christianity in India*, the abbé expressed his "gratitude" to the directors of the *East India Company*.

What were those "services"? Not conversion, since he was the first to admit his complete failure, but his account of Hindu customs, which soon became a reference for many European missionaries and scholars. F. Max Müller, for instance, who prefaced the book's revised edition (1897), found the author "a trustworthy authority . . . a man remarkably free from theological prejudices [whose] work will always retain its value" (p. ix).

Let us see how "free from prejudice" Dubois really is. From his own account, he learns a few native languages, takes care to dress and live as Indians do, and "to avoid any display of repugnance to the majority of their peculiar prejudices" (p. xi). But if he conceals his repugnance in life, it oozes out of every page of his 800-page book. It does contain interesting information, but always superficial and often based on mere rumour or simply misunderstood. His motivation, however, is clear: "It struck me that a faithful picture of the wickedness and incongruities of polytheism and idolatry would by its very ugliness help greatly to set off the beauties and perfections of Christianity" (p. 10).

The picture he paints is indeed as "ugly" as one might wish.

<sup>\*</sup> Abbé J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.. 1897, prepared par Henry K. Beauchamp, reprinted New Delhi: Rupa, 1992). All references are to the last edition.

"Every Hindu is an adept at disguising the truth," but Brahmins, in particular, are "clever charlatans ... absolutely unrivalled as arch-impostors" (p. 332). "Many of them possess abominable books in which the most filthy and disgusting forms of debauchery are systematically described and taught. ... But the depravity of the Hindus does not end there. There are depths of wickedness a thousand times more horrible to which the greater number of them are not ashamed to descend" (pp. 350-51). Worse, "their want of courage almost amounts to absolute cowardice": anything can be got out of them through flattery, they are incapable of "prudent forethought," even more so of gratitude, and are of "apathetic temperament" (p. 363).

So much for their moral sense; as for the physical, we learn that "all Hindus, and particularly Brahmins, have weak constitutions, and in this respect they are greatly inferior to Europeans." As a result, "the mental faculties of the Hindus appear to be as feeble as their physique. I would say that no other nation in the world could boast of as many idiots and imbeciles" (pp. 361-62). An edifying piece of information.

Let us turn to the beliefs of the Hindus, those "ministers of idolatry and falsehood" (p. 637): "sunk from time immemorial in the darkness of error" (p. 640), their "imagination is such that it cannot be excited except by what is monstrous and extravagant" — "what a consoling contrast [with] the sublime religion of Jesus Christ!" (p. 685-86). Thus, belief in reincarnation is a "monstrous superstition" (p. 632); as for Hindu gods, "their physiognomy is generally of frightful ugliness" and "the attitudes in which they are represented are either ridiculous, grotesque, or obscene. In short, everything is done to make them objects of disgust to anyone not familiar with the sight of these strange monsters" (p. 657).

There is no hope, therefore, for sculpture. But music, perhaps? "Hindu music, whether vocal or instrumental, may be pleasing to the natives, but I do not think it can give the slightest pleasure to anyone else, however little sensitive be his ear. ... Their songs have always appeared to me uninspiring and

monotonous, while from their instruments I have never heard anything but harsh, high and ear-splitting sounds" (p. 665).

"The degeneration of the human race in this country" extends even to animals and plants. Vegetables and fruits are "insipid and tasteless," and "the indigenous flowers, with two or three exceptions, have no scent" — apparently, our priest suffered from chronic sinusitis. Even forest trees "are generally covered with thorns and prickles," which shows that Dubois never entered an Indian forest; still, he asserts that except for the elephant and the tiger, "all the other animals, whether wild or domesticated, share in the universal debilitation." The lament goes on and on: the air is "always everywhere unhealthy," the soil "wanting in substance," water "usually brackish and unpleasant to the taste"; the countryside is "overrun with snakes and other deadly reptiles" and "every kind of irritating, destructive, and abominable insect swarms," not to speak of "poisonous plants" (pp. 361-62).

The picture thus painted is very nearly that of a Godforsaken place. In fact, Dubois dispels our last doubts by indulging in some etymological sleight of hand: the word "Gautama" is traced to *gota-maha*, and becomes "the great Gog or Magog" (p. 114). As everyone knows — at least the abbé's readers do —, in John's *Revelation*, Gog and Magog represent nations which, under Satan, wage war against the kingdom of God.

Dubois must have left India a frustrated man, but probably relieved to escape from this hell and return to France at Britain's expense, where he was to enjoy his British pension for another twenty-five years. But his skills at demonizing India and Hindus inspired many after him.

CB

# Swami Vivekananda on missionaries

"One thing I would tell you [American missionaries], and I do not mean any unkind criticism. You train and

educate and clothe and pay men to do what? To come over to my country to curse and abuse all my forefathers, my religion, and everything. They walk near a temple and say, 'You idolaters, you will go to hell.' But they dare not do that to the Mohammedans of India; the sword would be out. But the Hindu is too mild; he smiles and passes on, and says, 'Let the fools talk.' That is the attitude. And then you who train men to abuse and criticize, if I just touch you with the least bit of criticism, with the kindest of purpose, you shrink and cry, 'Don't touch us...'"

Complete Works (1990), vol. VIII, pp. 211-212

"What have the Hindus done to these disciples of Christ that every Christian child is taught to call the Hindus 'vile,' and 'wretches,' and the most horrible devils on earth? Part of the Sunday School education for children here [in the U.S.A.] consists in teaching them to hate everybody who is not a Christian, and the Hindus especially, so that, from their very childhood they may subscribe their pennies to the missions. If not for truth's sake, for the sake of the morality of their own children, the Christian missionaries ought not to allow such things going on. Is it any wonder that such children grow up to be ruthless and cruel men and women? The greater a preacher can paint the tortures of eternal hell — the fire that is burning there, the brimstone — the higher is his position among the orthodox. ... Look again at the books published in Madras against the Hindu religion. If a Hindu writes one such line against the Christian religion, the missionaries will cry fire and vengeance."

Complete Works (1990), vol. IV, p. 345

CB

# EDUCATION IN INDIA: DESTRUCTION AND CHANGE UNDER MISSIONARY AND COLONIAL INFLUENCE

Nivedita Raghunath Bhide\*

Education has always been a favourite field of missionary exertions, for self-evident reasons. This paper outlines the conquest of the Indian educational field.

The general impression about Indian education in pre-British India is that it was based on the Gurukula system of education, that the medium of instruction was Sanskrit, and that only the Brahmins were the privileged recipients of education, or rather kept education in their hands, denying it to other castes. But the truth is not so. Actually, India had universal primary education before the British came here. But she became an illiterate nation because of the policies of the British as influenced by Christian missionaries. How the most literate nation was transformed into an illiterate one needs to be seen.

# How Indian schools were starved of funds: the role of Charles Grant.

Since 1800, missionaries had been pressing the British government to make use of the Raj to convert the native

<sup>\*</sup> Nivedita Bhide joined the Vivekananda Kendra at a young age and has worked and researched especially in the field of education. She has written many articles and lectured widely on educational and cultural issues, and authored Bharateeya Womanhood Through the Ages (1997). (Eds.)

Indians. They began an intensive agitation in England with the object of persuading the Parliament to legislate on the matter and ensure the necessary freedom and assistance to missionaries. Foremost among them was Charles Grant. He painted an exaggerated picture of India's depressed condition, and then analyzed the causes as follows:

- · Ignorance and want of a proper religion;
- English language study to be adopted as the medium of instruction (which slowly and necessarily would convert Indians to Christianity);
- Natural sciences study to be taught to break down superstitions.

Grant's answers to the political dangers that may arise out of English education were:

- Christian teaching favours submission and good order among the people;
- Vegetable diet and absence of maritime taste among the Hindus will check ardent designs of independence;
- Political liberty cannot flourish among the timid submissive people of India.

If one analyzes the descriptions of India by European travellers before and just after the beginning of British rule, one is surprised at the sudden change in the tone and description. To justify missionary activities, to get government support, it became necessary for them to paint Indians as the most superstitious, barbaric heathens. The prestige of Charles Grant, as one who had known India at first hand, as an influential director of the East India Company and a member of Parliament, lent weight to his book and ultimately paved the way for the educational clauses of the Charter Act of 1813.\*

<sup>\*</sup> The Charter Act of 1813 asserted the sovereignty of the British Crown over the Indian territories held by the East India Company, renewed the Company's Charter for twenty years, assumed charge of education, and opened India to missionaries. (Eds.)

"That meant ... missionaries might fulfil their missionary calling in its completest and widest sense." The irony is, Charles Grant who was instrumental in destroying the Indian system of education and encouraging the missionary schools in India came to be known as the Father of modern Indian Education!

Thus missionaries opened a number of schools with the growing support of the government. As the rule of the East India Company expanded, so did the greed of British officers to levy taxes on tax-free lands. The revenue from those tax-free lands had been utilized by the villages for running schools, for medical care, irrigation, laying of roads, feeding of pilgrims etc. Nearly 50 to 35% of the cultivated lands came under the category of revenue-free lands; this was reduced to a mere 5% of all cultivated lands by the Charter Act of 1813.2 Thus giving full freedom to the missionaries on the one hand, the Charter Act withdrew the financial arrangements of Indian schools on the other. Naturally Indians protested, but they were told that all those functions would be henceforth taken care off by the government. The Education Board, Public Works Department, Irrigation department were formed for the purpose; the initiative of the people was thus destroyed and everything became government oriented. Lakhs of schools run by the Indians were starved of funds.

#### The educational survey and its startling results

The government also announced that one lakh rupees would be kept for the native education. But the amount was inadequate for the numerous Indian schools. The missionaries were not happy that even one lakh rupees was going to Indian schools: they kept mounting pressure at home, i.e. in Britain. As a result, on 2 July 1822, the British government ordered a survey of all educational institutions in India.

Even after a decade of lack of funds and deterioration, when a survey of the actual state of education in India was taken in 1822, the result was startling. William Adam observed in his first report that there seemed to exist about one lakh schools in Bengal and Bihar in the 1830s. A few years earlier, G. L. Prendergast had stated, "There is hardly a village, great or small, throughout our territories, in which there is not at least one school and in larger villages more." Thomas Munro reported for Madras Presidency that every village had a school. Campbell, Collector of Bellary, who carried the survey there reported "the economy with which children are taught to write in the native schools, and the system by which the more advanced scholars are caused to teach the less advanced and at the same time to confirm their own knowledge is certainly admirable and well deserved the imitation it has received in England."

Not just the Brahmins, but children of all castes were given elementary education. The British statistics for the survey in 1823-25 show that there was a school for every 400 people, and that the percentage of Brahmin students in village schools ranged between 13% and 23% and that of non-Brahmins from 70% to 84%. In the year 1823, the proportion of Brahmin teachers ranged from 7% to 48% and that of non-Brahmin teachers from 18% to 78%. In short, in spite of the financial starvation of the past few years, there still was a universal primary education. The education was for all communities and it was in the mother tongue.

Members of the British parliament found it hard to digest these figures, because in England education was still enjoyed only by the elite. The masses could go only to Sunday schools or charity schools where reading of the Bible and some arithmetic was taught. The teachers were seldom competent and not only ignorant but were often drunk. Not all children even went to Sunday schools; those who did attended school for 2 to 3 hours a week only. Mathematics was not a part of school curriculum till 1851 and writing was excluded for fear of evil consequences. In this background, when the report of the survey came, it was met with disbelief and thought to be erroneous. Though the British collectors who conducted survey

did praise the accomplishments of the students, the dedication of teachers and the extensive curriculum, the indigenous system was allowed to wither away, because of the missionary zeal and the need for the government to get servants cheaply. As supported by Campbell, the Collector of Bellary, the Indian system of monitorial teaching was adopted by Bell, a missionary in Madras, to be applied in England for educating the poor masses and the children of mill labourers. It came to be known as Bell's system there. Later when more funds were available, this system was discontinued in England. Though the British gave a push to mass education in Britain using the Indian system, it is an irony that in India that system was deliberately destroyed.

#### The entry and role of T. B. Macaulay

The missionaries agitated for the educational fund of one lakh rupees to be diverted to them, and for the complete charge of education to be handed over to them; their demand for the destruction of the Indian system of education ultimately led to invite Lord Macaulay to intervene. He was of the same opinion as the missionaries: to him, Indian education only imparted a "false history, false astronomy, false medicine ... in company with a false religion."7 Macaulay diverted the funds to missionaries, arguing that it would be the natives who would be studying in the missionary schools and so the amount kept for the native education could be given to the missionaries. He recommended English as medium of instruction. This decision he took out of utter contempt for regional languages which, according to him, were very crude: "a single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India."

The motive for choosing English as medium of instruction is clear from the following two passages.

Macaulay wrote in a letter to his father dated 12 October 1836:

Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully, we find it difficult ... to provide instruction for all who want it. At the single town of Hoogly 1,400 boys are learning English. The effect of this education on the Hindus is prodigious. No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. ... It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respected classes in Bengal in thirty years hence. And this will be effected without our efforts to proselytize; without the smallest interference with religious liberty; merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the prospect.

And in his Life of Lord Macaulay, G. O. Trevelyan wrote:

New India was born in 1835. ... What Alexander, Ashoka and the western missionaries had failed to do was accomplished by Macaulay's Educational Minute, decreeing that India was to receive through English education, the school and the language of the West. ... The very foundations of her ancient civilization began to rock and sway. Pillar after pillar in the edifice came crashing down. ... 8

#### **Downward Filtration Method**

Macaulay not only changed the aim and content of education, he also restricted education to the upper class. He found that the people of India could not be "educated" by a handful of missionaries in a short time. He said:

... It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals,

and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.<sup>9</sup>

The upper castes were selected by him to be this class of interpreters and thus the entry to the schools was restricted to them. This way of educating a selected few was called the "downward filtration theory." Along with the neglect and ultimate death of the indigenous system, it was this downward filtration method which increased the gap between upper and lower castes. The lower castes, who had already lost their economic status as a result of the industrial and land policy of the British, now lost their self-dignity and social status too with the loss of education.

### Subsequent legislations to destroy the Indian schools

Though many Indian schools had been closed for want of money, a sizable number of schools continued with the support of individuals. But the missionaries were still not satisfied. They wanted to destroy those Indian schools which were running without financial support. Their continuous pressure ultimately led to a series of restrictions and legislations. Many of the Indian schools were run in temple premises, verandas etc., as the Indian weather conditions are suitable for that. Britain being a cold country required pucca buildings. But a legislation was brought that unless a school had a pucca building, it would not be given recognition. As some Indian schools continued, in October 1844 Lord Harding as Governor-General issued a resolution which declared that in all government appointments, preference would be given to persons knowing English, even for lower posts. Thus English education began to be valued in terms of livelihood. It also introduced the idea that education gives one a passport for earning one's bread and butter, and that books are to be prized not for acquiring knowledge but for passing examinations — thus literary education was favoured while other branches were neglected. The seeds of the present unemployment among the educated were sown about a century ago.<sup>10</sup>

Centralized examinations were introduced to curb Indians from following their own syllabus; finally, in a complete check on private enterprise, Lord Curzon passed a resolution barring the admission of students of unrecognized schools to recognized schools. Under the new system, recognition ceased to be a mere advantage; it became a condition of existence and enabled the department to bring almost all secondary students under its effective control and supervision. Indian schools could hereafter survive only at the mercy of the supervising officers of the education department (who often happened to be British officers with missionary zeal).<sup>11</sup> Choked from all sides the Indian system of education became extinct.

In October 1931, when Mahatma Gandhi stated at Chataham House, London: "India today is much more illiterate than it was hundred years ago," he was challenged by Philip Hartog to prove it or to apologize. Mahatma Gandhi replied that he would prove it. But he could not find the time; it was his follower Sri Dharampal who painstakingly went through British records and ultimately could prove it with the survey report of 1823 by the British government. As per the survey report 36% students went to schools; but it was also mentioned by the Collectors who conducted the survey that an equal numbers of students were having home instruction at the time. With that, the literacy rate came to 72% thus making India the most literate nation in the world

#### Why is our education secular?

But the missionaries in India were not satisfied. According to them, the Company's school were godless and Bible had not yet been made compulsory. They wanted all the

schools to be handed over to them. Wood's dispatch of 1854 was mainly to look into these concerns; it accepted in principle all the claims of the missionaries.<sup>12</sup>

There were also very sensible points in Wood's dispatch, like the rejection of the downward filtration method, the adoption of modern languages as media of instruction at the secondary stage, and the inclusion of indigenous schools as the very foundation of a national system of education. But these points of the dispatch were simply ignored.<sup>13</sup>

Over the years, the missionaries found that as per 1854 Wood's dispatch, the whole of education was not given to them. On the other hand many company officials and Indian groups like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj had started schools as per the new system. They felt threatened and agitated for full control. The Indian Education Commission was appointed in 1882 to decide:

- a) whether the government should withdraw from direct educational enterprise in favour of missionaries, as the dispatch of 1854 had led some of them to hope;
- b) what the government policy should be in religious education, and should the Bible be taught;
- c) whether it should be imparted in schools or not; if yes then in what form, and subject to what conditions it was to be allowed.

The commission felt that along with Christians, Hindu groups may also demand religious education in their schools; it therefore reiterated the necessity to keep all government schools secular. It said that of course in missionary schools the students could be given full lessons on Christianity, and even in government schools it could be done as an undeclared policy. But to keep Hindus from teaching their religion, the policy was overtly to be secular. Thus a country where education had always been spiritual in aim was made secular by the British and the ideal of secularism was followed more to keep the religious knowledge of Hindus from being taught

at school. The same state of thing continues even now.

The missionaries were disappointed; they also realized that conversions were not taking place at the pace they had expected. After a lot of churning and thinking for a few years, they directed fresh efforts to such fields like the Aboriginals, hill tribes and other backward communities, where they thought conversion may be easier and faster. 15 To aid the missionaries in their efforts to divide and convert and for the British government to divide and rule, many theories were floated and drilled through the network of the schools. Around 1901, Bishop Caldwell sowed the seed that Tamilians were not "Aryan," i.e. Hindus. Directives were issued to enrol tribal communities as "animists" and not as Hindus; the perception was created that backward castes were backward because education was in the hands of the Brahmins, took place in Sanskrit, etc. Actually, what the Brahmins exclusively did was the chanting of Vedas; education was very much for all communities as is evident from the educational survey conducted by the British in 1823. And yet those facts were not just hidden but distorted further.

# But did the quality of education improve?

Can we say that at least we got a good *system* of education? Even that is not so. As the British government had set the aim of producing cheaply the servants it needed to run its empire, in India the curriculum followed at school was such that it did not contribute to the economic and industrial development of India.

The education given was too literary; it prepared the student for hardly anything beyond employment in clerical or teaching professions. Vocational education was not developed and the whole course was dominated by a rigid system of examination and hampered by the use of English as a medium of instruction. Though the education was literary, India's literature was excluded from it. So it could not inspire

or instil the traditional moral and ethical values in children. The student got estranged from their culture; they were cut off from their roots.

Actually the report from the select committee of the House of Commons gloated over the fact that "an improved system of education and more correct and enlarged views cannot fail to impress on the natives, a conviction of the absurdity, fallacies and errors of their religion; and must gradually lead to advancement and ultimate triumph of true religion." <sup>17</sup>

The teacher who was earlier solely responsible for the growth of the students, hence was dedicated and worked with responsibility, 18 was, in the changed system, a mistrusted tool. In this State-controlled system, even economically he was no better off than he was in the earlier decentralized one. He became a mercenary who carried the policies of the State but who was not trusted by the State, as is evident from the centralized setup of curriculum and conduct of examinations. As a result, he also lost the traditional respect from the students, and indiscipline started raising its ugly head. Earlier, as education was considered sacred, it was given and received with gratitude, now education became a commodity which could be sold and purchased. So the traditional father-son relationship between teacher and student became one of trader and customer.

In indigenous schools individual attention was given to each pupil; the child could proceed at his own speed. In the new schools fixed standards (the class system) were introduced; periodical examinations were held by departmental officers for promotion from class to class. The size of classes was increased so that the individual attention paid to pupils diminished. A certain amount of rigidity inevitably came up with these changes.<sup>19</sup>

#### The defects of the system

The system of education introduced by the missionary-

British combine was not practical too. In 1882, a very large percentage of those who passed the matriculation examinations joined colleges, partly because the more lucrative government posts were given only to holders of university degrees, and partly from a lack of alternative openings. 20 By 1902, the turnout of graduates had increased so much that it was no longer easy for the holder of a university degree to secure a government post. By 1921, collegiate education was facing the spectre of educated unemployment; the desire for government employment was no longer the most important cause of expansion of collegiate education. On the other hand, students were now driven to general education in college merely for lack of alternative openings: an ever-increasing number of secondary-school pupils were driven to matriculation in the first instance and thence to the arts and science colleges of the universities. This aimless increase of students in colleges of general education was therefore more a sign of disease rather than of robust growth.

Thus by 1921-22, collegiate education had developed some serious defects and became top-heavy, predominantly literary, and unhelpful for the industrial and commercial regeneration of the country. This was the logical conclusion of the policy outlined in the 1854 dispatch.<sup>21</sup>

One may pertinently ask what caused the failure of all attempts made since 1882 to provide alternative examinations at the matriculation level so as to divert students to various walks of life? Measures ought to have been adopted for the introduction of vocational or prevocational courses at the upper secondary stage; but they were not. On the other hand, the real issue got sidetracked by the belief that an alternative examination would meet all the needs of the situation. It was to the creation of such an examination system that most of the efforts were directed between 1882 and 1921 (and later), but these attempts did not succeed in introducing vocational or prevocational education, although they led to some enrichment of the secondary course and to some reforms of the

method of examination.22

The outcome of the British system of education was made quite clear in the Sergeant Report of 1944:\* "A great deal too much importance is attached to examinations ... themselves put a premium on book learning of a narrow kind at the expense of original thinking and real scholarship. ... Probably nowhere among the universities of the world is there so large a proportion of failure in examinations as in the Indian universities. The present intermediate course should be abolished" — again treating only the symptoms and not cause. "Ultimately the whole of this course should be covered in high school, but as an immediate step the first year of the course should be transferred to high school and the second to universities. ... The medium of instruction in all high schools should be the mother tongue of the pupils...."

After the folly of more than a hundred years, we see the British policy makers coming round. But the Rakshasa — the medium of English having acquired status as well as job value — had been let out of the bottle and refused to go back in. John Sergeant said:

I have no hesitation in insisting that the foreign system of education at present prevailing in India has to a large extent corrupted India's mentality. ... Its effect has been to imprison those associated with it at present in an inexplicable servitude of foreignmindedness.<sup>23</sup>

The neglect and uprooting of Indian education and its replacement by an alien and rootless system had several consequences for India. To begin with, it led to an obliteration of literacy and knowledge among Indians of such dimensions

<sup>\*</sup>John Sergeant headed a committee formed to prepare a comprehensive plan for Indian education. In its "Report of Post-War Educational Development in India," it advocated universal, compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 14, and a 25-year plan to eradicate illiteracy and spread adult education. (Eds.)

that recent attempts at universal literacy and education have so far been unable to make an appreciable improvement. Next it destroyed the Indian social balance which had not only enabled Indians to participate openly, appropriately and with dignity, in the social and cultural life of their locality but, if they wished, ensured participation at the more extended levels. It is this destruction along with similar damage in the economic sphere which led to a great deterioration in the status, socioeconomic conditions and personal dignity of those who are now known as scheduled castes, and, to a slightly lesser extent, in that of the vast peasant majority encompassed by the term "backward castes."

More importantly, till today it has not only kept most educated Indians ignorant of the society they live in, of the culture which sustains this society, and of their fellow beings, but yet more tragically for over a century it has induced a lack of confidence and a loss of bearing among the people of India in general.24 This situation of course helps Christian missionaries to secure conversions. Though they could not convert India at the speed they would have liked, they have succeeded in creating an atmosphere which gives them hope for rapid and sweeping progress.

#### 80 C8

## References

- 1. Syed Nurullah & J. P. Naik, A student's history of Education in India, pp. 40-46.
- 2. Dharampal, The Beautiful Tree, pp. 68-69.
- 3. Dharampal, The Beautiful Tree.
- 4. Ibid., p. 73.
- 5. Ibid., pp. 4-6.
- 6. Syed Nurullah & J. P. Naik, A student's history of Education in India, p. 12.
- 7. T. B. Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education, 2nd February 1835.
- 8. G. O. Trevelyan, Life of Lord Macaulay, vol. I, p. 464.
- 9. T. B. Macaulay's Minute.

#### Education in India: Destruction and Change

- 10. S. N. Mukerji, History of Education in India, p. 90.
- 11. Syed Nurullah & J. P. Naik, A student's history of Education in India, p. 226.
- 12. Ibid., p. 100.
- 13. Ibid., p. 118.
- 14. Ibid., p. 36.
- 15. Ibid., p. 138-143.
- 16. Ibid., p. 273.
- 17. Ibid., p. 35.
- 18. Dharampal, The Beautiful Tree, p. 14.
- 19. Syed Nurullah & J. P. Naik, A student's history of Education in India, p. 202.
- 20. Ibid., p. 159.
- 21. Ibid., p. 242-244.
- 22. Ibid., p. 247.
- 23. K. S. Vakil, Education in India, p. 1.
- 24. Dharampal, The Beautiful Tree, p. 78.

# **Christian Indology**

When militant Christianity cannot — or can no longer conquer physically, it tries to conquer the minds (hence its vested interest in education). Early in the nineteenth century, a new front opened with Indology: translations from Sanskrit texts into European languages had started appearing, prompting the creation of Sanskrit chairs in several countries of Europe. The publication of the Upanishads, the Gita and the Epics, sent powerful waves through Western literary and intellectual spheres. Casting a quick glance at them, however, missionaries lost no time in declaring that Hinduism was a "fabric of error" (Charles Grant), "the most stupendous of all the systems of false religion ever fabricated by the perverse ingenuity of fallen man" (Alexander Duff), created "a gross and disgusting picture of the universe" (James Mill), was "fruitful of monstrous superstitions" (Thomas Macaulay), and so on and so forth. Volumes could easily be filled with such drivel. Sri Aurobindo called it "the intemperate drunkenness of denunciation and vomit of false witness, hatred, uncharitableness and all things degrading and unspiritual and unclean that are the mark of a certain type of 'Christian literature'."1

As Swami Vivekananda put it, "I could not find one in that large concourse of missionaries who could understand a line in Sanskrit — and yet some of them read learned papers criticizing the Vedas, and all the sacred sources of the Hindu religion!"<sup>2</sup>

A better appreciation was expected from Europe's early Indologists, and some were indeed genuine admirers of Indian civilization. But others were Christian proselytizers in disguise — or, often, without disguise. The following few quotations, drawn from a few of the best-known Indologists of the time, are enough to cast doubt not only on their intellectual integrity, but on the actual value of their work.

- Monier Williams (1819-1899), remembered mostly for his Sanskrit-English dictionary, was Boden Professor of Sanskrit in the Oxford University; upon his appointment to this chair, he said: "I must draw attention to the fact that I am only the second occupant of the Boden Chair, and that its Founder, Colonel Boden, stated most explicitly in his will (dated August 15, 1811 AD) that the special object of his munificent bequest was to promote the translation of [Christian] Scriptures into Sanskrit, so as to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion." Monier Williams found the Veda "to abound more in puerile ideas than in striking thoughts and lofty conceptions" and the Upanishads to contain little more than "fanciful etymologies, farfetched analogies and puerile conceits."4 He wrote how Christians are "looking down from our undoubted pre-eminence on the adherents of false systems, such as Brahmans, Buddhists, Parsis, Fetish-worshippers, and Muslims...."5 To his mind, "Christian truth is at last creeping onwards and winning its way [in India],"6 and he prayed that "every man, woman and child, from Cape Comorin to the Himalaya mountains, may be elevated, enlightened, Christianized."7 On another occasion, he expressed his hope plainly: "When the walls of the mighty fortress of Brahmanism are encircled, undermined, and finally stormed by the soldiers of the cross, the victory of Christianity must be signal and complete."8
- H. H. Wilson (1786-1860), Monier Williams's predecessor at the Boden chair, was convinced that the "specious system of Vedic thought" would be "shown to be fallacious and false by the Ithuriel spear of Christian truth" Ithuriel being an angel sent to attack

Satan and whose sword infallibly exposed deceit, that of Hinduism in this case.

- R. T. H. Griffith (1826-1906), whose English translation of the Rig-Veda is still widely consulted, was struck by the "intolerable monotony of a great number of the hymns" and warned his readers "not to expect to find in these hymns and songs the sublime poetry that they meet in Isaiah or Job, or in the Psalms of David." 10
- F. Max Müller (1823-1900), perhaps the best known Indologist, and editor of the Sacred Books of the East series, marvelled at "the wild confusion of sublime truth with vulgar stupidity that meets us in the pages of the Veda,"11 found many of its hymns to "yield no sense whatever,"12 and asked, "That the Veda is full of childish, silly, even to our minds, monstrous conceptions, who would deny?...<sup>13</sup> To his mind, history taught that "the whole human race required a gradual education before, in the fullness of time, it could be admitted to the truths of Christianity. All the fallacies of human reason had to be exhausted before the light of a higher truth [i.e., Christianity] could meet with ready acceptance." Therefore, the religion of India "through its very errors ... may have but served to prepare the way of Christ...."14 After labouring to bring out the first edition of the Rig-Veda, he wrote to his wife: "This edition of mine and the translation of the Veda, will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last three thousand years."15 Two years later, in 1868, he wrote to the Duke of Argyle, then Minister for India: "The

ancient religion of India is doomed and if Christianity does not step in, whose fault will it be?"16

Such convictions were shared by many scholars of the days, and led to a serious misportrayal of Indian civilization. While today's Western Indologists rarely hold such crude proselytizing motives, they have often, consciously or not, assimilated the stereotypes assiduously propagated by their nineteenth-century precursors: fallacies about the "idolatry" or "polytheism" of Hinduism, for instance, remain widespread, also the misattribution of India's social problems to Hinduism. Although there have been many bright exceptions displaying a humble, unprejudiced approach to Indian culture, such an attitude appears to be beyond the reach of anyone still harbouring Christian convictions.

CB

#### References

- Sri Aurobindo, The Foundations of Indian Culture (Pondicherry: 1972), vol. 14, p. 77.
- 2. Swami Vivekananda, Complete Works (1990), vol. IV, p. 344.
- 3. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 1899, preface, p. IX.
- 4. Monier Williams, Indian Wisdom, op. cit., p. 39.
- 5. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom* (1875, reprinted New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2001), p. xlii.
- 6. Ibid., ix.
- 7. Quoted by Arun Shourie in *Missionaries in India Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas* (New Delhi : ASA, 1994), p. 152.
- 8. Monier Williams, Modern India and the Indians, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1879, p 262.
- Quoted in the extensive website: www.hinduwisdom.info/FirstIndologists.htm.
- 10. Ralph T. H. Griffith's *The Hymns of the Rgveda* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p. vi.

### Expressions of Christianity, with a focus on India

- 11. F. Max Müller, Sacred Books of the East (1879), vol. I, p. xv.
- 12. Ibid., p. ix.
- 13. Ibid., p. 88.
- 14. F. Max Müller, A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature (Allahabad: 1859, reprint New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993), p. 17.
- 15. F. Max Müller, Life and Letters, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1902), p. 328.
- 16. F. Max Müller, ibid., p. 378.

# Part 4

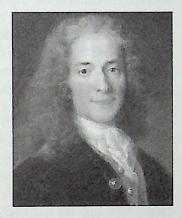
# Intellectual Challenges to Christianity

Since the "age of Enlightenment," numerous Western thinkers have expressed themselves against Christianity. They have highlighted, and often ridiculed, the irrationality of biblical tenets and Christian beliefs, their seed of cruelty, and the monstrosity of Christianity's historical record. This often led them to condemn or reject religion as a whole, by which they usually meant the Judeo-Christian religions, preferring a wholesome agnosticism or atheism to creeds eager to keep humanity bound in a world of sin and guilt, of dogmatism and heresy, or fire and brimstone.

In this fourth part, out of the huge mass of anti-Christian literature, we present a few significant texts. They will show, at the very least, that what is known as "Christian West" is, in reality, far less Christian than Christianity would have us believe.

# **VOLTAIRE** (1694-1778)

This indefatigable French philosopher, playwright, poet, essayist, historian, polemist (his complete works comprise over 70 volumes), embodied the eighteenth-century Enlightenment better than anyone else. Courting kings and queens eventually to earn their ire, Voltaire spent time in prison, in exile, and in various refuges. He nevertheless perfected the art of flattery, all the more necessary as he



needed to sugarcoat his free thought, his biting irony, his abhorrence of all dogmatism, all fanaticism, all superstition, all intolerance — écrasez l'infâme! was his motto ("crush the infamy!"), which could refer to despots or tyrants, but, more often than not, to his bête noire, Christianity. Most likely an agnostic, he once said, "I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one: 'O Lord, make my enemies ridiculous.' And God granted it."

In work after work — *The Philosophical Dictionary, On Toleration,* several of his famous tales, numerous essays and countless letters — Voltaire attacked Christianity\* not only for its bloodstained history but on the sheer absurdity of its tenets.

<sup>\*</sup> Voltaire's pioneering critique spawned a vast amount of literature exposing the flaws of the Bible. Many essays, lists of biblical quotations etc. can also be found on the Internet, for instance at:

www.ffrf.org (we recommend the quiz at www.ffrf.org/quiz/bquiz.php), www.infidels.org, www.secular.org, www.jesusneverexisted.com, www.atheism.org, www.positiveatheism.org,

http://dim.com/~randl/tcont.htm,

http://skepticsannotatedbible.com/ (and in particular:

http://skepticsannotatedbible.com/contra/short.html).

No one who read him could turn to the Bible without being repelled by its irrationality, its barbaric passages and endless internal contradictions. Voltaire in effect undermined the very foundations of Christianity, always maintaining his trademark levity, his second- or third-degree irony, or sometimes appearing to defend the religion the better to demolish it; he would also often create scholars and theologians (as in the following "Questions of Zapata") to put the most damaging statements into their mouths.

It is little wonder that Voltaire attracted the fury of churchmen and that many of his works have long figured on the Vatican's index librorum prohibitorum. What angered the Church, however, was not just Voltaire's writings; it was also his actions, for he did not confine himself to armchair criticism. Although he disliked the Protestant creed as much as the Catholic, he was horrified by the story of Jean Calas, a humble Protestant trader at Toulouse (south-western France), who was falsely accused by the Catholic mob of murdering one of his sons to prevent him from converting to Catholicism (the son had in fact committed suicide). Calas was arrested and summarily judged in March 1762; publicly tortured on the wheel, his limbs broken, strangled and finally burned, he protested his innocence to his last breath. Convinced by another son of Calas, Voltaire led a campaign for the father's rehabilitation: a 50-judge panel finally overturned Calas's conviction exactly three years after his martyrdom, and the King ordered an indemnification to the family. Voltaire's treatise On Toleration followed and had a wide influence.

Just five months after Calas's rehabilitation, on 9 August 1765 a crucifix was found mutilated at Abbeville, in northern France. Without the smallest proof, public suspicion targeted the nineteen-year-old Chevalier de la Barre; Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, found in his possession, removed all doubts: the bishop of Amiens was determined to make an example out of him. The trial, despite a vigorous defence, condemned the teenager for blasphemy and sentenced him

to death, a sentence which King Louis XV refused to overturn. On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1766, his hand and tongue chopped off, de la Barre was decapitated before being burned. Voltaire wrote a scathing attack on the whole affair, for which he was condemned; but residing in Geneva at the time, he escaped punishment. (It is only with the French Revolution that de la Barre was rehabilitated, in 1791.)

A few years later, at Castres (southern France), in a repeat of the Calas affair, two Protestants, the Sirvens, were unjustly accused of having murdered their daughter to prevent her conversion to Catholicism (she had in fact thrown herself into a well to avoid being forcibly put into a convent). Luckily, they were able to flee. Sentenced to death *in absentia*, they were defended by Voltaire, who succeeded in having them declared innocent in 1771.

In the next century, the French writer Victor Hugo called Voltaire "a giant of the spirit" and compared his achievements to the twelve labours of Heracles: "Superstition denounced, hypocrisy unmasked, the Inquisition killed, the magistracy muzzled, torture dishonoured, Calas rehabilitated, de la Barre avenged, Sirven defended, customs made gentler, laws healthier, reason set free, and human consciousness freed, too, from the vulture called fanaticism."

In 1894, Robert Ingersoll, in a powerful lecture, exclaimed: "Voltaire! a name that excites the admiration of men, the malignity of priests. Pronounce that name in the presence of a clergyman, and you will find that you have made a declaration of war. Pronounce that name, and from the face of the priest the mask of meekness will fall, and from the mouth of forgiveness will pour a Niagara of vituperation and calumny. And yet Voltaire was the greatest man of his century, and did more to free the human race than any other of the sons of men."

#### Voltaire

# THE QUESTIONS OF ZAPATA

(Translated by Dr. Tamponet, of the Sorbonne)

The licentiate Zapata, being appointed Professor of Theology at the University of Salamanca, presented these questions to a committee of doctors in 1629. They were suppressed. The Spanish copy is in the Brunswick Library.\*

#### Wise Masters:

1. How ought I to proceed with the object of showing that the Jews, whom we burn by the hundred, were for four thousand years God's chosen people?

2. How could God, whom one cannot without blasphemy regard as unjust, forsake the whole earth for the little Jewish tribe, and then abandon this little group for another, which, during two hundred years, was even smaller and more despised?

3. Why did he perform a number of incomprehensible miracles in favour of this miserable nation before the period which is called *historical*? Why did he, some centuries ago, cease to perform them? And why do we, who are God's people, never witness any?

<sup>\*</sup>This introductory note by Voltaire is, of course, wholly Voltairian: there is neither a Zapata nor a Tamponet; however, the reader should keep in mind that in this text, Voltaire constantly refers to actual passages from the Bible. Extracted from *Toleration and Other Essays by Voltaire*, translated and introduced by Joseph McCabe (New York, 1912); we have kept all spelling unchanged. (Eds.)

- 4. If God is the God of Abraham, why do you burn the children of Abraham? And, when you burn them, why do you recite their prayers? How is it that, since you worship the book of their law, you put them to death for observing that law?
- 5. How shall I reconcile the chronology of the Chinese, Chaldæans, Phœnicians, and Egyptians with that of the Jews? And how shall I reconcile the forty different methods of calculation which I find in the commentators? If I say that God dictated the book, I may be told that God evidently is not an expert in chronology.
- 6. By what argument can I prove that the books attributed to Moses were written by him in the desert? How could he say that he wrote beyond the Jordan when he never crossed the Jordan? I may be told that God is evidently not good at geography.
- 7. The book entitled *Joshua* says that Joshua had *Deuteronomy* engraved on stones coated with mortar; this passage in *Joshua*, and others in ancient writers, clearly prove that in the days of Moses and Joshua the peoples of the East engraved their laws and observations on stone and brick. The Pentateuch tells us that the Jewish people were without food and clothing in the desert; it seems hardly probable that, if they had no tailors or shoemakers, they had men who were able to engrave a large book. In any case, how did they preserve this large work inscribed in mortar?
- 8. What is the best way to refute the objections of the learned men who find in the Pentateuch the names of towns which were not yet in existence: precepts for kings whom the Jews detested, and who did not reign until seven hundred years after Moses; and passages in which the author betrays that he was much later than Moses, as: "The bed of Og, which is still seen in Ramath," "The Canaanite was then in the land," etc., etc., etc., etc., etc.?

These learned men might, with the difficulties and contradictions which they impute to the Jewish chronicles, give some trouble to a licentiate.

9. Is the book of *Genesis* to be taken literally or allegorically? Did God really take a rib from Adam and make woman therewith? and, if so, why is it previously stated that he made man male and female? How did God create light before the sun? How did he separate light from darkness, since darkness is merely the absence of light? How could there be a day before the sun was made? How was the firmament made amid the waters, since there is no such thing as a firmament? — it is an illusion of the ancient Greeks. There are those who suggest that *Genesis* was not written until the Jews had some knowledge of the erroneous philosophy of other peoples, and it would pain me to hear it said that God knows no more about physics than he does about chronology and geography.

10. What shall I say of the garden of Eden, from which issued a river which divided into four rivers — the Tigris, Euphrates, Phison (which is believed to be the Phasis), and Gihon, which flows in Ethiopia, and must therefore be the Nile, the source of which is a thousand miles from the source of the Euphrates? I shall be told once more that God is a very

poor geographer.

11. I should, with all my heart, like to eat the fruit which hung from the tree of knowledge; and it seems to me that the prohibition to eat it is strange. Since God endowed man with reason, he ought to encourage him to advance in knowledge. Did he wish to be served only by fools? I should also like to have speech with the serpent, since it was so intelligent; but I should like to know what language it spoke. The Emperor Julian, a great philosopher, asked this of the great St. Cyril, who could not meet the question, and said to the learned emperor: "You are the serpent." St. Cyril was not polite; but you will observe that he did not perpetrate this theological impertinence until Julian was dead. . . .

13. How shall I get out of the deluge, the cataracts of heaven (which has no cataracts), and the animals coming from Japan, Africa, America, and the south, and being enclosed in a large ark with food and drink for one year, without counting the

time when the earth was still too damp to produce food for them? How did Noah's little family manage to give all these animals their proper food? It consisted only of eight persons.

14. How can I make the story of the tower of Babel plausible? This tower must have been higher than the pyramids of Egypt, since God allowed the building of the pyramids. Did it reach as high as Venus, or at least to the moon?

15. By what device shall I justify the two lies of Abraham, the father of believers, who, at the age of one hundred and thirty-five (counting carefully), represented the pretty Sarah as his sister in Egypt and at Gerar, in order that the kings of those countries might fall in love with her and make presents to him? What a naughty thing to do, to sell one's wife!...

20. How must I treat the sojourn of the Jews in Egypt and their escape? *Exodus* says that they remained four hundred years in Egypt; but, counting carefully, we find only two hundred and five years. Why did Pharaoh's daughter bathe in the Nile, in which no one ever bathes on account of the crocodiles?, etc., etc.

21. Moses having wedded the daughter of an idolater, how could God choose him as his prophet without reproaching him? How could Pharaoh's magicians work the same miracles as Moses, except that of covering the land with lice and vermin? How could they change into blood all the waters, since these had already been changed into blood by Moses? How was it that Moses, led by God himself, and at the head of six hundred and thirty thousand fighting men, fled with his people, instead of taking Egypt, in which God had slain all the first-born? Egypt never had an army of a hundred thousand men, from the first mention of it in historical times. How was it that Moses, flying with his troops from the land of Goshen, crossed half of Egypt, instead of going straight to Canaan, and advanced as far as Memphis, between Baal-Sephon and the Red Sea? Finally, how could Pharaoh pursue him with all his cavalry when, in the fifth plague of Egypt, God had just destroyed all the horses and beasts in the country, and, moreover, Egypt, which is much broken by canals, always had very little cavalry?...

- 23. I am not sufficiently versed in chemistry to deal happily with the golden calf which, *Exodus* says, was made in a day, and which Moses reduced to ashes. Are they two miracles, or two possibilities of human art?
- 24. Was it a further miracle for the leader of a nation, in a desert, to have twenty-three thousand men of that nation slain by a single one of the twelve tribes, and for twenty-three thousand men to let themselves be massacred without making any defence? . . .
- 26. What explanation shall I give of the law which forbids the eating of the hare "because it ruminates, and has not a cloven foot," whereas hares have cloven feet and do not ruminate? We have already seen that this remarkable book suggests that God is a poor geographer, a poor chronologist, and a poor physicist; he seems to have been no less weak in natural history. How can I explain other equally wise laws, such as that of the waters of jealousy and the sentence of death on a man who lies with his wife during the menstrual period? etc., etc., etc. Can I justify these barbaric and ridiculous laws, which are said to have been given by God himself? . . .
- 28. What reply shall I make to those who ask how the walls of Jericho fell at the sound of a trumpet, and why other towns did not fall in the same way?...
- 33. Ought I to admit or deny that the Jewish law nowhere speaks of punishment or reward after death? How is it that neither Moses nor Joshua ever spoke of the immortality of the soul, a dogma well known to the ancient Egyptians, Chaldæans, Persians, and Greeks, but hardly known to the Jews until after the time of Alexander, and always rejected by the Sadducees because it is not in the Pentateuch?...
- 42. We owe great respect to David, who was a man after God's heart; but I fear I am not learned enough to justify, by ordinary laws, the conduct of David in associating with four hundred men of evil ways, and burdened with debt, as the

Scripture says; in going to sack the house of the king's servant Nabal, and marrying his widow a week later; in offering his services to Achish, the king's enemy, and spreading fire and blood over the land of the allies of Achish, without sparing either age or sex; in taking new concubines as soon as he is on the throne; and, not content with these concubines, in stealing Bathsheba from her husband, whom he not only dishonours, but slays. I find it difficult to imagine how God could afterwards descend, in Judæa, from this adulterous and homicidal woman, who is counted among the ancestresses of the Eternal. I have already warned you that this article causes much trouble to pious souls.

43. The wealth of David and Solomon, which amounted to more than five hundred thousand million gold ducats, seems to be not easily reconciled with the poverty of the country and with the condition to which the Jews were reduced under Saul, when they had not the means of sharpening their ploughshares and axes. Our cavalry officers will shrug their shoulders when I tell them that Solomon had four hundred thousand horses in a little country where there never were, and are not to-day, anything but asses, as I have already had the honour to represent to you.

44. If I were to run over the history of the frightful cruelties of nearly all the kings of Judah and Israel, I fear I should scandalise, rather than edify, the weak. These kings assassinate each other a little too frequently. It is bad politics, if I am not mistaken.

45. I see this small people almost always in bondage to the Phœnicians, Babylonians, Persians, Syrians, or Romans; and I may have some trouble in reconciling so much misery with the magnificent promises of their prophets. . . .

50. I have still greater need of your wise guidance in regard to the New Testament. I hardly know what to say when I have to reconcile the two genealogies of Jesus. I shall be reminded that Matthew makes Jacob the father of Joseph, while Luke makes him the son of Heli, and that this is impossible unless

we change *He* into *Ja* and *li* into *cob*. I shall be asked why the one counts fifty-six generations and the other only forty-two, and why the generations are quite different; and then why only forty-one are given instead of the promised forty-two; and lastly why the genealogical tree of Joseph was given at all, seeing that he was not the father of Jesus. I fear to make a fool of myself, as so many of my predecessors have done. I trust that you will extricate me from this labyrinth.

- 51. If I declare that, as Luke says, Augustus had ordered a census to be taken of the whole earth when Mary was pregnant, and that Cyrenius or Quirinus, the governor of Syria, published the decree, and that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be enumerated; and if people laugh at me, and antiquarians teach me that there never was a census of the Roman Empire, that Quintilius Varus, not Cyrenius, was at that time governor of Syria, and that Cyrenius only governed Syria ten years after the birth of Jesus, I shall be very much embarrassed, and no doubt you will extricate me from this little difficulty. For how could a book be inspired if there were one single untruth in it?
  - 52. When I teach that, as Matthew says, the family went into Egypt, I shall be told that that is not true, but that, as the other evangelists say, the family remained in Judæa; and if I then grant that they remained in Judæa, I shall be told that they were in Egypt. Is it not simpler to say that one can be in two places at once, as happened to St. Francis Xavier and several other saints?
  - 53. Astronomers may laugh at the star which led the three kings to a stable. But you are great astrologers, and will be able to explain the phenomenon. Tell me, especially, how much gold the kings presented. For you are wont to extort a good deal of it from kings and peoples. And in regard to the fourth king, Herod, why did he fear that Jesus, born in a stable, might become king of the Jews? Herod was king only by permission of the Romans; it was the business of Augustus. The massacre of the innocents is rather curious. I am disap-

pointed that no Roman writer mentions it. An ancient and most truthful (as they all are) martyrology gives the number of these martyred infants as fourteen thousand. If you would like me to add a few thousand more, you have only to say so.

- 54. You will tell me how the devil carried off God and perched him on a hill in Galilee, from which one could see all the kingdoms of the earth. The devil promising these kingdoms to God, provided God worships the devil, may scandalise many good people, whom I recommend to your notice.
- 55. I beg you, when you go to a wedding feast, to tell me how God, who also went to a wedding feast, succeeded in changing water into wine for the sake of people who were already drunk.
- 56. When you eat figs at breakfast towards the end of July, I beg you to tell me why God, being hungry, looked for figs at the beginning of the month of March, when it was not the season of figs.
- 57. Having received your instructions on all the prodigies of this nature, I shall have to say that God was condemned to be executed for original sin. And if I am told that there was never any question of original sin, either in the Old or the New Testament; that it is merely stated that Adam was condemned to die on the day on which he should eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and he did not die; and that Augustine, bishop of Hippo, formerly a Manichean, was the first to set up the doctrine of original sin, I submit to you that, as my hearers are not the simple folk of Hippo, I run some risk of exciting derision by speaking much without saying anvthing. When certain cavillers came to show me that God could not possibly be executed because an apple was eaten four thousand years before his death, and could not possibly have redeemed the human race, yet, apart from a chosen few, left the whole of it in the devil's claws, I had only verbiage to give in reply, and went away to hide my shame.
- 58. Throw some light for me on the prophecy which Our Lord makes in *Luke* (ch. xxi). Jesus says explicitly that he will

come in a cloud with great power and great glory before the generation to which he speaks shall pass away. He did not do this; he did not come in the clouds. If he came in some fog or other, we know nothing about it; tell me what you think. The Apostle Paul also says to his Thessalonian disciples that they will go with him in the clouds to Jesus. Why did they not go? Does it cost more to go to the clouds than to the third heaven? I beg your forgiveness, but I prefer the clouds of Aristophanes to those of Paul.

59. Shall I say with Luke that Jesus went up to heaven from the little village of Bethany? Shall I state with Matthew that it was from Galilee, where the disciples saw him for the last time? Or shall I take the word of a learned doctor who says that Jesus had one foot in Bethany and another in Galilee? The latter opinion seems to me the more probable, but I will await your decision.

60. I shall then be asked whether Peter was ever at Rome. I shall reply, of course, that he was pope there for twenty-five years; and the chief reason I shall give is that we have an epistle from the good man (who could neither read nor write), and that it is dated from Babylon. There is no answer to that argument, but I should like something stronger.

61. Please tell me why the "Apostles' Creed" was not written until the time of Jerome and Rufinus, four hundred years after the apostles. Tell me why the earliest fathers of the Church never quote any but the gospels which we call apocryphal. Is it not a clear proof that the four canonical gospels had not yet been written?

62. Are you not sorry, as I am, that the early Christians forged so much bad poetry, and attributed it to the Sibyls? And that they forged letters of Paul and Seneca, of Jesus, of Mary, and of Pilate? And that they thus set up their sect on a hundred forgeries which would be punished to-day by any court in the world? These frauds are now recognised by all scholars. We are reduced to calling them "pious." But is it not sad that your truth should be based on lies?

63. Tell me why, since Jesus did not institute seven sacraments, we have seven sacraments;\* why, whereas Jesus never said that he was threefold and had two natures and two wills and one person, we make him threefold, with one person and two natures; and why, having two wills, he had not the will to instruct us in the dogmas of the Christian religion.

64. Is the pope infallible when he consorts with his mistress, and when he brings to supper a bottle of poisoned wine for Cardinal Cornetto?\*\* When two councils anathematise each other, as has often happened, which of them is infallible?

65. Would it not really be better to avoid these labyrinths, and simply preach virtue? When God comes to judge us, I doubt very much if he will ask us whether grace is versatile or concomitant, whether marriage is the visible sign of an invisible thing, whether we believe that there are ten choirs of angels or nine, whether the pope is above the council or the council above the pope. Will it be a crime in his eyes to have prayed to him in Spanish when one does not know Latin? Shall we be visited with his cruel wrath for having eaten a pennyworth of bad meat on a certain day? And shall we be eternally rewarded if, like you, my learned masters, we ate a hundred piastres' worth of turbot, sole, and sturgeon? You do not believe it in the depth of your hearts; you believe that God will judge you by your works, not by the opinions of Thomas and Bonaventure.

Shall I not render a service to men in speaking to them only of morality? This morality is so pure, so holy, so universal, so clear, so ancient, that it seems to come from God himself, like the light which we regard as the first of his works. Has he not given men self-love to secure their preservation; benevolence, beneficence, and virtue to control their self-love; the

<sup>\*</sup> The number recognised in the Church of Rome. [Joseph McCabe's footnote]

<sup>\*\*</sup> The author was thinking, apparently, of Pope Alexander VI. [Footnote by Voltaire, pretending the "author" to be Zapata.]

natural need to form a society; pleasure to enjoy, pain to warn us to enjoy in moderation, passions to spur us to great deeds, and wisdom to curb our passions? Will you allow me to announce these truths to the noble people of Spain?

66. If you bid me conceal these truths, and strictly enjoin me to announce the miracles of St. James of Galicia, or of Our Lady of Atocha, or of Maria d'Agreda (who in her ecstasies behaved in a most improper manner), tell me what I must do with those who dare to doubt? Must I, for their edification, have the ordinary and extraordinary question put to them?\*

I await the honour of your reply,

Dominico Zapata, y verdadero, y honrado, y caricativo.\*\*

Zapata, receiving no answer, took to preaching God in all simplicity. He announced to men the common father, the rewarder, punisher, and pardoner. He extricated the truth from the lies, and separated religion from fanaticism; he taught and practised virtue. He was gentle, kindly, and modest; and he was burned at Valladolid in the year of grace 1631. Pray God for the soul of Brother Zapata.

80 CB

<sup>\*</sup> The tortures of the Inquisition. [Joseph McCabe's footnote]

<sup>\*\*</sup> Spanish for "True, honest and merciful." (Eds.)

# HERETICS AND HERESIES

## Robert G. Ingersoll

Colonel Ingersoll (1833-99) served in the American Civil War before becoming a famous U.S. lawyer, a writer and a powerful orator, with a worldview based on humanism and rationalism. Through his lectures and writings he defended free thought, the abolition of slavery, woman's

suffrage, and made unsparing attacks on Christianity, vigorously denouncing its abuses and advocating agnosticism. His radical views stood in the way of his attaining high political offices; once, for instance, he was pressured to run for Governor but asked to conceal his agnosticism during the campaign — he turned down the offer. A puritanical press often attacked him for his rejection of Christianity,



but this did not lessen his popularity. After listening to a lecture of his, Mark Twain wrote to his wife, "I heard [a speech] by that splendid old soul, Col. Bob Ingersoll — oh, it was just the supremest combination of English words that was ever put together since the world began."

The following lecture, delivered in 1874, was subtitled "Liberty, a word without which all words are vain."\*

<sup>\*</sup>This text is extracted from *Lectures of Col. R. G. Ingersoll* (electronic edition by Project Gutenberg at www.gutenberg.org). We omitted a few portions and added the section titles; in a few places we modernized the punctuation and the spelling. (Eds.)

Whoever has an opinion of his own, and honestly expresses it, will be guilty of heresy. Heresy is what the minority believe; it is the name given by the powerful to the doctrine of the weak. This word was born of the hatred, arrogance and cruelty of those who love their enemies, and who, when smitten on one cheek, turn the other. This word was born of intellectual slavery in the feudal ages of thought. It was an epithet used in the place of argument. From the commencement of the Christian era, every art has been exhausted and every conceivable punishment inflicted to force all people to hold the same religious opinions. This effort was born of the idea that a certain belief was necessary to the salvation of the soul. Christ taught, and the church still teaches, that unbelief is the blackest of crimes. God is supposed to hate with an infinite and implacable hatred, every heretic upon the earth, and the heretics who have died are supposed at this moment to be suffering the agonies of the damned. The church persecutes the living and her God burns, for all eternity, the dead.

It is claimed that God wrote a book called the Bible, and it is generally admitted that this book is somewhat difficult to understand. As long as the church had all the copies of this book, and the people were not allowed to read it, there was comparatively little heresy in the world; but when it was printed and read, people began honestly to differ as to its meaning. A few were independent and brave enough to give the world their real thoughts, and for the extermination of these men the church used all her power. Protestants and Catholics vied with each other in the work of enslaving the human mind. For ages they were rivals in the infamous effort to rid the earth of honest people. They infested every country, every city, town, hamlet and family. They appealed to the worst passions of the human heart. They sowed the seeds of discord and hatred in every land. Brother denounced brother, wives informed against their husbands, mothers accused their children, dungeons were crowded with the innocent; the flesh of the good and true rotted in the clasp of chains; the

flames devoured the heroic, and in the name of the most merciful God, his children were exterminated with famine, sword, and fire. Over the wild waves of battle rose and fell the banner of Jesus Christ. For sixteen hundred years the robes of the church were red with innocent blood. The ingenuity of Christians was exhausted in devising punishment severe enough to be inflicted upon other Christians who honestly and sincerely differed with them upon any point whatever.

Give any orthodox church the power, and today they would punish heresy with whip, and chain, and fire. As long as a church deems a certain belief essential to salvation, just so long it will kill and burn if it has the power. Why should the church pity a man whom her God hates? Why should she show mercy to a kind and noble heretic whom her God will burn in eternal fire? Why should a Christian be better than his God? It is impossible for the imagination to conceive of a greater atrocity than has been perpetrated by the church. Every nerve in the human body capable of pain has been sought out and touched.

#### Orthodox Christianity

Let it be remembered that all churches have persecuted heretics to the fullest extent of their power. Toleration has increased only when and where the power of the church has diminished. From Augustine until now the spirit of the Christians has remained the same. There has been the same intolerance, the same undying hatred of all who think for themselves, and the same determination to crush out of the human brain all knowledge inconsistent with an ignorant creed.

Every church pretends that it has a revelation from God, and that this revelation must be given to the people through the church; that the church acts through its priests, and that ordinary mortals must be content with a revelation — not from God — but from the church. Had the people submitted

to this preposterous claim, of course there could have been but one church, and that church never could have advanced. It might have retrograded, because it is not necessary to think or investigate in order to forget. Without heresy there could have been no progress.

The highest type of the orthodox Christian does not forget; neither does he learn. He neither advances nor recedes. He is a living fossil embedded in that rock called faith. He makes no effort to better his condition, because all his strength is exhausted in keeping other people from improving theirs. The supreme desire of his heart is to force all others to adopt his creed, and in order to accomplish this object he denounces free thinking as a crime, and this crime he calls heresy. When he had power, heresy was the most terrible and formidable of words. It meant confiscation, exile, imprisonment, torture, and death.

In those days the cross and rack\* were inseparable companions. Across the open Bible lay the sword and fagot.\*\* Not content with burning such heretics as were alive, they even tried the dead, in order that the church might rob their wives and children. The property of all heretics was confiscated, and on this account they charged the dead with being heretical — indicted, as it were, their dust — to the end that the church might clutch the bread of orphans. Learned divines discussed the propriety of tearing out the tongues of heretics before they were burned, and the general opinion was, that this ought to be done so that the heretics should not be able, by uttering blasphemies, to shock the Christians who were burning them.\*\*\* With a mixture of ferocity and Christianity, the priests insisted that heretics ought to be burned at a slow

<sup>\*</sup> A "classic" instrument of torture in medieval Europe, consisting of a frame on which the victim was bound and stretched until the limbs became dislocated. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> The bundle of sticks kept at the base of the stake where the victim would be burned. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>This was done in the case of Giordano Bruno (see Part 2). (Eds.)

fire, giving as a reason that more time was given them for repentance.

No wonder that Jesus Christ said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword" [Mathew 10:34].

Every priest regarded himself as the agent of God. He answered all questions by authority, and to treat him with disrespect was an insult offered to God. No one was asked to think, but all were commanded to obey.

In 1208 the Inquisition was established. Seven years afterward, the fourth council of the Lateran enjoined all kings and rulers to swear an oath that they would exterminate heretics from their dominions. The sword of the church was unsheathed, and the world was at the mercy of ignorant and infuriated priests, whose eyes feasted upon the agonies they inflicted. Acting, as they believed, or pretended to believe, under the command of God; stimulated by the hope of infinite reward in another world — hating heretics with every drop of their bestial blood; savage beyond description; merciless beyond conception — these infamous priests, in a kind of frenzied joy, leaped upon the helpless victims of their rage. They crushed their bones in iron boots; tore their quivering flesh with iron hooks and pincers; cut off their lips and eyelids; pulled out their nails, and into the bleeding quick thrust needles; tore out their tongues; extinguished their eyes; stretched them upon racks; flayed them alive; crucified them with their heads downward; exposed them to wild beasts; burned them at the stake; mocked their cries and groans; robbed their children, and then prayed God to finish the holy work in hell.

Millions upon millions were sacrificed upon the altars of bigotry. The Catholic burned the Lutheran, the Lutheran burned the Catholic, the Episcopalian tortured the Presbyterian, the Presbyterian tortured the Episcopalian. Every denomination killed all it could of every other; and each Christian felt in duty bound to exterminate every other Christian who denied the smallest fraction of his creed.

In the reign of Henry VIII — that pious and moral founder of the apostolic Episcopal Church — there was passed by the parliament of England an act entitled "An act for abolishing of diversity of opinion." And in this act was set forth what a good Christian was obliged to believe:

First, That in the sacrament was the real body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Second, That the body and blood of Jesus Christ was in the bread, and the blood and body of Jesus Christ was in the wine.

Third, That priests should not marry.

Fourth, That vows of chastity were of perpetual obligation.

Fifth, That private masses ought to be continued; and, Sixth, That auricular confession to a priest must be maintained.

This creed was made by law, in order that all men might know just what to believe by simply reading the statute. The church hated to see the people wearing out their brains in thinking upon these subjects. It was thought far better that a creed should be made by parliament, so that whatever might be lacking in evidence might be made up in force. The punishment for denying the first article was death by fire. For the denial of any other article, imprisonment, and for the second offence — death.

Your attention is called to these six articles, established during the reign of Henry VIII, and by the Church of England, simply because not one of these articles is believed by that church today. If the law then made by the church could be enforced now, every Episcopalian would be burned at the stake.

Similar laws were passed in most Christian countries, as all orthodox churches firmly believed that mankind could be legislated into heaven. According to the creed of every church, slavery leads to heaven, liberty leads to hell. It was claimed that God had founded the church, and that to deny the authority of the church was to be a traitor to God, and consequently an ally of the devil. To torture and destroy one of the soldiers of Satan was a duty no good Christian cared to neglect. Nothing can be sweeter than to earn the gratitude of God by killing your own enemies. Such a mingling of profit and revenge, of heaven for yourself and damnation for those you dislike, is a temptation that your ordinary Christian never resists.

## A persecuting Bible

According to the theologians, God, the Father of us all, wrote a letter to his children. The children have always differed somewhat as to the meaning of this letter. In consequence of these honest differences, these brothers began to cut out each other's hearts. In every land, where this letter from God has been read, the children to whom and for whom it was written have been filled with hatred and malice. They have imprisoned and murdered each other, and the wives and children of each other. In the name of God every possible crime has been committed, every conceivable outrage has been perpetrated. Brave men, tender and loving women, beautiful girls, and prattling babes have been exterminated in the name of Jesus Christ. For more than fifty generations the church has carried the black flag. Her vengeance has been measured only by her power. During all these years of infamy no heretic has ever been forgiven. With the heart of a fiend she has hated; with the clutch of avarice she has grasped; with the jaws of a dragon she has devoured; pitiless as famine, merciless as fire, with the conscience of a serpent: such is the history of the Church of God.

I do not say, and I do not believe, that Christians are as bad as their creeds. In spite of church and dogma, there have been millions and millions of men and women true to the loftiest and most generous promptings of the human heart. They have been true to their convictions, and, with a self-denial

and fortitude excelled by none, have labored and suffered for the salvation of men. Imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, believing that by personal effort they could rescue at least a few souls from the infinite shadow of hell, they have cheerfully endured every hardship and scorned every danger. And yet, notwithstanding all this, they believed that honest error was a crime. They knew that the Bible so declared, and they believed that all unbelievers would be eternally lost. They believed that religion was of God, and all heresy of the devil. They killed heretics in defense of their own souls and the souls of their children. They killed them because, according to their idea, they were the enemies of God, and because the Bible teaches that the blood of the unbeliever is a most acceptable sacrifice to heaven.

Nature never prompted a loving mother to throw her child into the Ganges.\* Nature never prompted men to exterminate each other for a difference of opinion concerning the baptism of infants. These crimes have been produced by religions filled with all that is illogical, cruel and hideous. These religions were produced for the most part by ignorance, tyranny and hypocrisy. Under the impression that the infinite ruler and creator of the universe had commanded the destruction of heretics and infidels, the church perpetrated all these crimes.

Men and women have been burned for thinking there is but one God; that there was none; that the Holy Ghost is younger than God; that God was somewhat older than his son; for insisting that good works will save a man without faith; that faith will do without good works; for declaring that a sweet babe will not be burned eternally, because its parents failed to have its head wet by a priest; for speaking of God as though he had a nose; for denying that Christ was his own father; for contending that three persons [i.e. the Trinity], rightly

<sup>\*</sup> Ingersoll perhaps believed this canard routinely spread (among many others) by missionaries about Hindus. (Eds.)

added together, make more than one; for believing in purgatory; for denying the reality of hell; for pretending that priests can forgive sins; for preaching that God is an essence; for denying that witches rode through the air on sticks; for doubting the total depravity of the human heart; for laughing at irresistible grace, predestination and particular redemption; for denying that good bread could be made of the body of a dead man; for pretending that the pope was not managing this world for God, and in the place of God; for disputing the efficacy of a vicarious atonement; for thinking the Virgin Mary was born like other people; for thinking that a man's rib was hardly sufficient to make a good-sized woman; for denying that God used his finger for a pen; for asserting that prayers are not answered, that diseases are not sent to punish unbelief; for denying the authority of the Bible; for having a Bible in their possession; for attending mass, and for refusing to attend; for wearing a surplice; for carrying a cross, and for refusing; for being a Catholic, and for being a Protestant; for being an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, a Baptist, and for being a Quaker. In short, every virtue has been a crime, and every crime a virtue. The church has burned honesty and rewarded hypocrisy. And all this, because it was commanded by a book — a book that men had been taught implicitly to believe, long before they knew one word that was in it. They had been taught that to doubt the truth of this book — to examine it, even — was a crime of such enormity that it could not be forgiven, either in this world or in the next.

The Bible was the real persecutor. The Bible burned heretics, built dungeons, founded the Inquisition, and trampled upon all the liberties of men.

How long, O how long will mankind worship a book? How long will they grovel in the dust before the ignorant legends of the barbaric past? How long, O how long will they pursue phantoms in a darkness deeper than death?

#### Calvin and heretics

Unfortunately for the world, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, a man by the name of Gerard Chauvin was married to Jeanne Lefranc, and still more unfortunately for the world, the fruit of this marriage was a son, called John Chauvin, who afterwards became famous as John Calvin, the founder of the Presbyterian Church.

This man forged five fetters for the brain. These fetters he called points. That is to say, predestination, particular redemption, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. About the neck of each follower he put a collar bristling with these live iron points. The presence of all these points on the collar is still the test of orthodoxy in the church he founded. This man, when in the flush of youth, was elected to the office of preacher in Geneva. He at once, in union with Farel, drew up a condensed statement of the Presbyterian doctrine, and all the citizens of Geneva, on pain of banishment, were compelled to take an oath that they believed this statement. Of this proceeding Calvin very innocently remarked that it produced great satisfaction. A man named Caroli had the audacity to dispute with Calvin. For this outrage he was banished.

To show you what great subjects occupied the attention of Calvin, it is only necessary to state that he furiously discussed the question as to whether the sacramental bread should be leavened or unleavened. He drew up laws regulating the cut of the citizens' clothes, and prescribing their diet, and all those whose garments were not in the Calvin fashion were refused the sacrament. At last, the people becoming tired of this petty theological tyranny, banished Calvin. In a few years, however, he was recalled and received with great enthusiasm. After this he was supreme, and the will of Calvin became the law of Geneva.

Under his benign administration, James Gruet was beheaded because he had written some profane verses. The slightest

word against Calvin or his absurd doctrines was punished as a crime.

In 1553 a man was tried at Vienna [in France] by the Catholic Church for heresy. He was convicted and sentenced to death by burning. It was apparently his good fortune to escape. Pursued by the sleuth hounds of intolerance he fled to Geneva for protection. A dove flying from hawks, sought safety in the nest of a vulture. This fugitive from the cruelty of Rome asked shelter from John Calvin, who had written a book in favor of religious toleration. Serviettes\* had forgotten that this book was written by Calvin when in the minority; that it was written in weakness to be forgotten in power; that it was produced by fear instead of principle. He did not know that Calvin had caused his arrest at Vienna, in France, and had sent a copy of his work, which was claimed to be blasphemous, to the archbishop. He did not then know that the Protestant Calvin was acting as one of the detectives of the Catholic Church, and had been instrumental in procuring his conviction for heresy. Ignorant of all this unspeakable infamy, he put himself in the power of this very Calvin. The maker of the Presbyterian creed caused the fugitive Serviettes to be arrested for blasphemy. He was tried. Calvin was his accuser. He was convicted and condemned to death by fire. On the morning of the fatal day, Calvin saw him, and Serviettes, the victim, asked forgiveness of Calvin, the murderer. Serviettes was bound to the stake, and the fagots were lighted. The wind carried the flames somewhat away from his body, so that he slowly roasted for hours. Vainly he implored a speedy death. At last the flames climbed round his form; through smoke

<sup>\*</sup>Better known as Michael Servetus (Michel Servet in French), a physician of Spanish origin (1511-53), who lived in southern France and made the first discoveries that led to the principle of blood circulation. Drawn to theology, he corresponded with Calvin, rejecting the Trinity and even Christ's divinity; he developed his convictions in a book published anonymously, but the Protestant Calvin had him denounced to the Catholic Inquisition. Ingersoll narrates the rest of the story. (Eds.)

and fire his murderers saw a white heroic face. And there they watched until a man became a charred and shriveled mass.

Liberty was banished from Geneva, and nothing but Presbyterianism was left. Honor, justice, mercy, reason and charity were all exiled; but the five points of predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, total depravity, and the certain perseverance of the saints remained instead.

Calvin founded a little theocracy, modeled after the Old Testament, and succeeded in erecting the most detestable government that ever existed, except the one from which it was copied.

Against all this intolerance, one man, a minister [i.e. a pastor], raised his voice. The name of this man should never be forgotten. It was Castalio. This brave man had the goodness and the courage to declare the innocence of honest error. He was the first of the so-called reformers to take this noble ground. I wish I had the genius to pay a fitting tribute to his memory. Perhaps it would be impossible to pay him a grander compliment than to say Castalio was in all things the opposite of Calvin. To plead for the right of individual judgment was considered a crime, and Castalio was driven from Geneva by John Calvin. By him he was denounced as a child of the devil, as a dog of Satan, as a beast from hell, and as one who, by this horrid blasphemy of the innocence of honest error, crucified Christ afresh, and by him he was pursued until rescued by the hand of death.

Upon the name of Castalio, Calvin heaped every epithet, until his malice was nearly satisfied and his imagination entirely exhausted. It is impossible to conceive how human nature can become so frightfully perverted as to pursue a fellow-man with the malignity of a fiend, simply because he is good, just, and generous.

Calvin was of a pallid, bloodless complexion, thin, sickly, irritable, gloomy, impatient, egotistic, tyrannical, heartless, and infamous. He was a strange compound of revengeful morality, malicious forgiveness, ferocious charity, egotistic

humility, and a kind of hellish justice. In other words, he was as near like the God of the Old Testament as his health permitted. The best thing, however, about the Presbyterians of Geneva was that they denied the power of the Pope, and the best thing about the Pope was that he was not a Presbyterian.

The doctrines of Calvin spread rapidly, and were eagerly accepted by multitudes on the continent; but Scotland, in a few years, became the real fortress of Presbyterianism. The Scotch succeeded in establishing the same kind of theocracy that flourished in Geneva. The clergy took possession and control of everybody and everything. It is impossible to exaggerate the mental degradation, the abject superstition of the people of Scotland during the reign of Presbyterianism. Heretics were hunted and devoured as though they had been wild beasts. The gloomy insanity of Presbyterianism took possession of a great majority of the people. They regarded their ministers as the Jews did Moses and Aaron. They believed that they were the especial agents of God, and that whatsoever they bound in Scotland would be bound in heaven. There was not one particle of intellectual freedom. No man was allowed to differ with the church, or to even contradict a priest. Had Presbyterianism maintained its ascendancy, Scotland would have been peopled by savages today.

The revengeful spirit of Calvin took possession of the Puritans, and caused them to redden the soil of the New World with the brave blood of honest men. Clinging to the five points of Calvin, they too established governments in accordance with the teachings of the Old Testament. They too attached the penalty of death to the expression of honest thought. They too believed their church supreme, and exerted all their power to curse this continent with a spiritual despotism as infamous as it was absurd. They believed with Luther that universal toleration is universal error, and universal error is universal hell. Toleration was denounced as a crime.

### An heretic charged in Chicago

Fortunately for us, civilization has had a softening effect even upon the Presbyterian Church. To the ennobling influence of the arts and sciences the savage spirit of Calvinism has, in some slight degree, succumbed. True, the old creed remains substantially as it was written, but by a kind of tacit understanding it has come to be regarded as a relic of the past. The cry of "heresy" has been growing fainter and fainter, and, as a consequence, the ministers of that denomination have ventured, now and then, to express doubts as to the damnation of infants, and the doctrine of total depravity. The fact is, the old ideas became a little monotonous to the people. The fall of man, the scheme of redemption and irresistible grace, began to have a familiar sound. The preachers told the old stories while the congregations slept. Some of the ministers became tired of these stories themselves. The five points grew dull, and they felt that nothing short of irresistible grace could bear this endless repetition. The outside world was full of progress, and in every direction men advanced, while this church, anchored to a creed, idly rotted at the shore. Other denominations, imbued some little with the spirit of investigation, were springing up on every side, while the old Presbyterian ark rested on the Ararat\* of the past, filled with the theological monsters of another age.

Lured by the splendors of the outer world, tempted by the achievements of science, longing to feel the throb and heat of the mighty march of the human race, a few of the ministers of this conservative denomination were compelled, by irresistible sense, to say a few words in harmony with the splendid ideas of today.

These utterances have upon several occasions so nearly wakened some of the members that, rubbing their eyes, they

<sup>\*</sup> Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark landed, according to Genesis. (Eds.)

have feebly inquired whether these grand ideas were not somewhat heretical. These ministers found that just in the proportion that their orthodoxy decreased, their congregations increased. Those who dealt in the pure unadulterated article found themselves demonstrating the five points to a less number of hearers than they had points. Stung to madness by this bitter truth, this galling contrast, this harassing fact, the really orthodox have raised the cry of heresy, and expect with this cry to seal the lips of honest men. One of the Presbyterian ministers, and one who has been enjoying the luxury of a little honest thought, and the real rapture of expressing it, has already been indicted, and is about to be tried by the Presbyter of Illinois. He is charged —

First, With having neglected to preach that most comforting and consoling truth, the eternal damnation of the soul.

Surely, that man must be a monster who could wish to blot this blessed doctrine out and rob earth's wretched children of this blissful hope!

Who can estimate the misery that has been caused by this most infamous doctrine of eternal punishment? Think of the lives it has blighted, of the tears it has caused — of the agony it has produced. Think of the millions who have been driven to insanity by this most terrible of dogmas. This doctrine renders God the basest and most cruel being in the universe. Compared with him, the most frightful deities of the most barbarous and degraded tribes are miracles of goodness and mercy. There is nothing more degrading than to worship such a god. Lower than this the soul can never sink. If the doctrine of eternal damnation is true, let me share the fate of the unconverted; let me have my portion in hell, rather than in heaven with a god infamous enough to inflict eternal misery upon any of the sons of men. . . .

Third. With having spoken disparagingly of the doctrine of

predestination.

If there is any dogma that ought to be protected by law, predestination is that doctrine. Surely it is a cheerful, joyous

thing, to one who is laboring, struggling, and suffering in this weary world, to think that before he existed; before the earth was; before a star had glittered in the heavens; before a ray of light had left the quiver of the sun, his destiny had been irrevocably fixed, and that for an eternity before his birth he had been doomed to bear eternal pain. . . .

Fifth. With having inculcated a phase of the doctrine commonly known as "evolution," or "development."

The church believes and teaches the exact opposite of this doctrine. According to the philosophy of theology, man has continued to degenerate for six thousand years. To teach that there is that in nature which impels to higher forms and grander ends, is heresy, of course. The Deity will damn Spencer and his "Evolution," Darwin and his "Origin of Species," Huxley and his "Protoplasm," Tyndall and his "Prayer Gauge," and will save those, and those only, who declare that the universe has been cursed, from the smallest atom to the grandest star; that everything tends to evil and to that only, and that the only perfect thing in nature is the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. . . .

*Eight.* With having doubted that God was the author of the 109<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

The portion of that psalm which carries with it the clearest and most satisfactory evidences of inspiration, and which has afforded almost unspeakable consolation to the Presbyterian Church, is as follows:

Set thou a wicked man over him; and let Satan stand at his right hand.

When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin.

Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let

the stranger spoil his labor.

Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children.

Let his posterity be cut off: and in the generation following let their names be blotted out. ...

But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for Thy name's sake; because Thy mercy is good, deliver Thou me.

I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth.

Think of a God wicked and malicious enough to inspire this prayer. Think of one infamous enough to answer it.

Had this inspired psalm been found in some temple erected for the worship of snakes, or in the possession of some cannibal king, written with blood upon the dried skins of babes, there would have been a perfect harmony between its surroundings and its sentiments....

Ninth. With having said that the battles in which the Israelites engaged, with the approval and command of Jehovah, surpassed in cruelty those of Julius Caesar.

Was it Julius Caesar who said, "And the Lord our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain"?\*

Did Julius Caesar send the following report to the Roman senate? "And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, three-score cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and Bars; beside unwalled towns a great many. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon, king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the

<sup>\*</sup>This quotation and the following ones are, of course, all from the Old Testament and are about slaughters perpetrated by the Hebrews under Jehovah's command. (Eds.)

men, women, and children of every city."

Did Caesar take the city of Jericho "and utterly destroy all that was in the city, both men and women, young and old"? Did he smite "all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings, and leave none remaining that breathed, as the Lord God had commanded"?

Search the records of the whole world, find out the history of every barbarous tribe, and you can find no crime that touched a lower depth of infamy than those the Bible's God commanded and approved. For such a God I have no words to express my loathing and contempt, and all the words in all the languages of man would scarcely be sufficient. Away with such a God! Give me Jupiter rather, with Io and Europa, or even Siva with his skulls and snakes.

Tenth. With having repudiated the doctrine of "total depravity."

What a precious doctrine is that of the total depravity of the human heart! How sweet it is to believe that the lives of all the good and great were continual sins and perpetual crimes; that the love a mother bears her child is, in the sight of God, a sin; that the gratitude of the natural heart is simple meanness; that the tears of pity are impure; that for the unconverted to live and labor for others is an offence to heaven; that the noblest aspirations of the soul are low and groveling in the sight of God; that man should fall upon his knees and ask forgiveness, simply for loving his wife and child, and that even the act of asking forgiveness is in fact a crime!

Surely it is a kind of bliss to feel that every woman and child in the wide world, with the exception of those who believe the five points, or some other equally cruel creed, and such children as have been baptized, ought at this very moment to be dashed down to the lowest glowing gulf of hell.

Take from the Christian the history of his own church — leave that entirely out of the question — and he has no

argument left with which to substantiate the total depravity of man. . . .

### Why should we convert?

Twelfth. With having spoken and written somewhat lightly of the idea of converting the heathen with doctrinal sermons.

Of all the failures of which we have any history or knowledge, the missionary effort is the most conspicuous. The whole question has been decided here, in our own country, and conclusively settled. We have nearly exterminated the [American] Indians, but we have converted none. From the days of John Eliot to the execution of the last Modoc, not one Indian has been the subject of irresistible grace or particular redemption. The few red men who roam the western wilderness have no thought or care concerning the five points of Calvin. They are utterly oblivious to the great and vital truths contained in the Thirty-nine Articles, the Saybrook platform, and the resolutions of the Evangelical Alliance. No Indian has ever scalped another on account of his religious belief. This of itself shows conclusively that the missionaries have had no effect.

Why should we convert the heathen of China and kill our own? Why should we send missionaries across the seas, and soldiers over the plains? Why should we send Bibles to the east and muskets to the west? If it is impossible to convert Indians who have no religion of their own; no prejudice for or against the "eternal procession of the Holy Ghost," how can we expect to convert a heathen who has a religion; who has plenty of gods and Bibles and prophets and Christs, and who has a religious literature far grander than our own? Can we hope with the story of Daniel in the lions' den to rival the stupendous miracles of India? Is there anything in our Bible as lofty and loving as the prayer of the Buddhist? Compare your "Confession of Faith" with the following: "Never will I seek nor receive private individual salvation — never enter

into final peace alone; but forever and everywhere will I live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature throughout all worlds. Until all are delivered, never will I leave the world of sin, sorrow, and struggle, but will remain where I am."

Think of sending an average Presbyterian to convert a man who daily offers this tender, this infinitely generous, this incomparable prayer. Think of reading the 109<sup>th</sup> Psalm to a heathen who has a Bible of his own in which is found this passage. "Blessed is that man and beloved of all the gods, who is afraid of no man, and of whom no man is afraid."

Why should you read even the New Testament to a Hindu, when his own Krishna has said, "If a man strike thee, and in striking drop his staff, pick it up and hand it to him again"? Why send a Presbyterian to a Sufi, who says, "Better one moment of silent contemplation and inward love, than seventy thousand years of outward worship?" "Who would carelessly tread one worm that crawls on earth, that heartless one is darkly alienated from God; but he that, living, embraceth all things in his love, to live with him God bursts all bounds above, below."

Compare this prayer with the curses and cruelties of the Old Testament — with the infamies commanded and approved by the being whom we are taught to worship as a God — and with the following tender product of Presbyterianism: "It may seem absurd to human wisdom that God should harden, blind, and deliver up some men to a reprobate sense; that he should first deliver them over to evil, and then condemn them for that evil; but the believing spiritual man sees no absurdity in all this, knowing that God would be never a whit less good even though he should destroy all men."

Of all the religions that have been produced by the egotism, the malice, the ignorance and ambition of man, Presbyterianism is the most hideous. . . .

Upon these charges, a minister is to be tried, here in Chicago; in this city of pluck and progress — this marvel of

energy — this miracle of nerve. The cry of "heresy," here, sounds like a wail from the Dark Ages — a shriek from the Inquisition, or a groan from the grave of Calvin.

Another effort is being made to enslave a man.

### Heresy, the eternal dawn

It is claimed that every member of the church has solemnly agreed never to outgrow the creed; that he has pledged himself to remain an intellectual dwarf. Upon this condition the church agrees to save his soul, and he hands over his brains to bind the bargain. Should a fact be found inconsistent with the creed, he binds himself to deny the fact and curse the finder. With scraps of dogmas and crumbs of doctrine, he agrees that his soul shall be satisfied forever. What an intellectual feast the Confession of Faith must be! It reminds one of the dinner described by Sydney Smith, where everything was cold except the water, and everything sour except the vinegar.

Every member of a church promises to remain orthodox, that is to say — stationary. Growth is heresy. Orthodox ideas are the feathers that have been molted by the eagle of progress. They are the dead leaves under the majestic palm, while heresy is the bud and blossom at the top.

Imagine a vine that grows at one end and decays at the other. The end that grows is heresy, the end that rots is orthodox. The dead are orthodox, and your cemetery is the most perfect type of a well regulated church. No thought, no progress, no heresy there. Slowly and silently, side by side, the satisfied members peacefully decay. There is only this difference — the dead do not persecute.

And what does a trial for heresy mean? ... A trial for heresy means that the spirit of persecution still lingers in the church; that it still denies the right of private judgement; that it still thinks more of creed than truth, and that it is still determined to prevent the intellectual growth of man. It means that

churches are shambles in which are bought and sold the souls of men. It means that the church is still guilty of the barbarity of opposing thought with force. It means that if it had the power, the mental horizon would be bounded by a creed; that it would bring again the whips and chains and dungeon keys, the rack and fagot of the past.

But let me tell the church it lacks the power. There have been, and still are, too many men who own themselves — too much thought, too much knowledge for the church to grasp again the sword of power. The church must abdicate. For the Eglon of superstition, Science has a message from Truth.

The heretics have not thought and suffered and died in vain. Every heretic has been, and is, a ray of light. Not in vain did Voltaire, that great man, point from the foot of the Alps the finger of scorn at every hypocrite in Europe. Not in vain were the splendid utterances of the infidels, while beyond all price are the discoveries of science.

The church has impeded, but it has not and it cannot stop the onward march of the human race. Heresy cannot be burned, nor imprisoned, nor starved. It laughs at presbyters and synods, at ecumenical councils and the impotent thunders of Sinai. Heresy is the eternal dawn, the morning star, the glittering herald of the day. Heresy is the last and best thought. It is the perpetual New World, the unknown sea, toward which the brave all sail. It is the eternal horizon of progress.

Heresy extends the hospitalities of the brain to a new thought.

Heresy is a cradle; orthodoxy, a coffin.

Why should man be afraid to think, and why should he fear to express his thoughts?

Is it possible that an infinite Deity is unwilling that a man should investigate the phenomena by which he is surrounded? Is it possible that a god delights in threatening and terrifying men? What glory, what honor and renown a god must win on such a field! The ocean raving at a drop; a star envious of

a candle; the sun jealous of a fire-fly.

Go on, presbyters and synods, go on! Thrust the heretics out of the church — that is to say, throw away your brains — put out your eyes. The infidels will thank you. They are willing to adopt your exiles. Every deserter from your camp is a recruit for the army of progress. Cling to the ignorant dogmas of the past; read the 109<sup>th</sup> Psalm; gloat over the slaughter of mothers and babes; thank God for total depravity; shower your honors upon hypocrites, and silence every minister who is touched with that heresy called genius.

Be true to your history. Turn out the astronomers, the geologists, the naturalists, the chemists, and all the honest scientists. With a whip of scorpions, drive them all out. We want them all. Keep the ignorant, the superstitious, the bigoted, and the writers of charges and specifications. Keep them, and keep them all. Repeat your pious platitudes in the drowsy ears of the faithful, and read your Bible to heretics, as kings read some forgotten riot-act to stop and stay the waves of revolution. You are too weak to excite anger. We forgive your efforts as the sun forgives a cloud — as the air forgives the breath you waste.

How long, O how long, will man listen to the threats of God, and shut his eyes to the splendid possibilities of Nature? How long, O how long will man remain the cringing slave of a false and cruel creed?

By this time the whole world should know that the real Bible has not yet been written, but is being written, and that it will never be finished until the race begins its downward march, or ceases to exist.

The real Bible is not the work of inspired men, nor prophets, nor apostles, nor evangelists, nor of Christs. Every man who finds a fact, adds, as it were, a word to this great book. It is not attested by prophecy, by miracles or signs. It makes no appeal to faith, to ignorance, to credulity or fear. It has no punishment for unbelief, and no reward for hypocrisy. It appeals to man in the name of demonstration. It has nothing

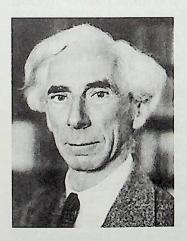
to conceal. It has no fear of being read, of being contradicted, of being investigated and understood. It does not pretend to be holy, or sacred; it simply claims to be true. It challenges the scrutiny of all, and implores every reader to verify every line for himself. It is incapable of being blasphemed. This book appeals to all the surroundings of man. Each thing that exists testifies of its perfection. The earth, with its heart of fire and crowns of snow; with its forests and plains, its rocks and seas; with its every wave and cloud; with its every leaf and bud and flower, confirms its every word, and the solemn stars, shining in the infinite abysses, are the eternal witnesses of its truth.



# WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN

#### **Bertrand Russell**

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) was a British mathematician and philosopher, and one of the most influential Western intellectuals of the twentieth century; he was also an



active social campaigner (for nuclear disarmament, among other causes), a vocal critic of military aggression (as that of Vietnam by the U.S.A.), and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. Among his well-known pronouncements are: "The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts." "Most people would rather die than think; in fact,

they do so." "Three passions have governed my life: the longings for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of humankind."

In 1927, Russell delivered at the London's National Secular Society a lecture with the above title, which was to become famous for its bold and wholly rational critique of the Christian concept of divinity and of Christ's character. In the excerpts presented here, \* we have omitted most of the first part, which exposed the flaws in the arguments

<sup>\*</sup>Excerpted from Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays, ed. Paul Edwards (1957). To Russell's quotations from the New Testament we added references, all of them from Mathew's Gospel (Eds.).

presented by Christian theology as proofs of the existence of God, arguments based on the narrow Judeo-Christian concept of God and therefore of less relevance in the Indian concept.

### What Is a Christian?

Nowadays, ... there are two ... items which are quite essential to anybody calling himself a Christian. The first is one of a dogmatic nature — namely, that you must believe in God and immortality. If you do not believe in those two things, I do not think that you can properly call yourself a Christian. Then, further than that, as the name implies, you must have some kind of belief about Christ. ... I think you must have at the very lowest the belief that Christ was, if not divine, at least the best and wisest of men. ... Therefore I take it that when I tell you why I am not a Christian I have to tell you two different things: first, why I do not believe in God and in immortality; and, secondly, why I do not think that Christ was the best and wisest of men, although I grant him a very high degree of moral goodness.

But for the successful efforts of unbelievers in the past, I could not take so elastic a definition of Christianity as that. As I said before, in olden days it had a much more full-blooded sense. For instance, it included the belief in hell. Belief in eternal hell-fire was an essential item of Christian belief until pretty recent times. In this country, as you know, it ceased to be an essential item because of a decision of the Privy Council, and from that decision the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York dissented; but in this country our religion is settled by Act of Parliament, and therefore the Privy Council was able to override their Graces and hell was no longer necessary to a Christian.\* Consequently I shall not insist that a Christian must believe in hell. . . .

<sup>\*</sup> See the following box, "A Godless Orthodoxy." (Eds.)

#### The Character of Christ

I now want to say a few words upon a topic which I often think is not quite sufficiently dealt with by Rationalists, and that is the question whether Christ was the best and the wisest of men. It is generally taken for granted that we should all agree that that was so. I do not myself. I think that there are a good many points upon which I agree with Christ a great deal more than the professing Christians do. I do not know that I could go with Him all the way, but I could go with Him much further than most professing Christians can. You will remember that He said, "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" [5:39]. That is not a new precept or a new principle. It was used by Lao-tse and Buddha some 500 or 600 years before Christ, but it is not a principle which as a matter of fact Christians accept. I have no doubt that the present prime minister [Stanley Baldwin], for instance, is a most sincere Christian, but I should not advise any of you to go and smite him on one cheek. I think you might find that he thought this text was intended in a figurative sense.

Then there is another point which I consider excellent. You will remember that Christ said, "Judge not lest ye be judged" [7:1]. That principle I do not think you would find was popular in the law courts of Christian countries. I have known in my time quite a number of judges who were very earnest Christians, and none of them felt that they were acting contrary to Christian principles in what they did. Then Christ says, "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."\* That is a very good principle. Your Chairman has reminded you that we are not here to talk politics, but I cannot help observing that the last general election was fought on the question of how

<sup>\*</sup> A version in plainer English is: "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." [5:42]

desirable it was to turn away from him that would borrow of thee, so that one must assume that the Liberals and Conservatives of this country are composed of people who do not agree with the teaching of Christ, because they certainly did very emphatically turn away on that occasion.

Then there is one other maxim of Christ which I think has a great deal in it, but I do not find that it is very popular among some of our Christian friends. He says, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor" [19:21]. That is a very excellent maxim, but, as I say, it is not much practised. All these, I think, are good maxims, although they are a little difficult to live up to. I do not profess to live up to them myself; but then, after all, it is not quite the same thing as for a Christian.

# Defects in Christ's Teaching

Having granted the excellence of these maxims, I come to certain points in which I do not believe that one can grant either the superlative wisdom or the superlative goodness of Christ as depicted in the Gospels; and here I may say that one is not concerned with the historical question. Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about him, so that I am not concerned with the historical question, which is a very difficult one. I am concerned with Christ as He appears in the Gospels, taking the Gospel narrative as it stands, and there one does find some things that do not seem to be very wise. For one thing, he certainly thought that His second coming would occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at that time. There are a great many texts that prove that. He says, for instance, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come" [10:23]. Then he says, "There are some standing here which shall not taste death till the Son of Man comes into His kingdom" [16:28]; and there are a lot of places where it is quite clear that He believed that His second coming would happen during the lifetime of many then living.\* That was the belief of His earlier followers, and it was the basis of a good deal of His moral teaching. When He said, "Take no thought for the morrow" [6:34], and things of that sort, it was very largely because He thought that the second coming was going to be very soon, and that all ordinary mundane affairs did not count. I have, as a matter of fact, known some Christians who did believe that the second coming was imminent.\*\* I knew a parson [= pastor] who frightened his congregation terribly by telling them that the second coming was very imminent indeed, but they were much consoled when they found that he was planting trees in his garden. The early Christians did really believe it, and they did abstain from such things as planting trees in their gardens, because they did accept from Christ the belief that the second coming was imminent. In that respect, clearly He was not so wise as some other people have been, and He was certainly not superlatively wise.

### The Moral Problem

Then you come to moral questions. There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment. Christ certainly as depicted in the Gospels did believe in everlasting punishment, and one does find repeatedly a vindictive fury against those people who would not listen to

<sup>\*</sup> For instance Mathew 24:34: "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" — "these things" including Jesus' coming on the clouds of heaven, complete with angels and trumpets. C. S. Lewis called it "the most embarrassing verse in the Bible." (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup>Indeed, many fundamentalist Christians firmly believed that Jesus' second coming would take place on 1st January 2000. Now they have revised the date somewhat. (Eds.)

His preaching — an attitude which is not uncommon with preachers, but which does somewhat detract from superlative excellence. You do not, for instance find that attitude in Socrates. You find him quite bland and urbane toward the people who would not listen to him; and it is, to my mind, far more worthy of a sage to take that line than to take the line of indignation. You probably all remember the sorts of things that Socrates was saying when he was dying, and the sort of things that he generally did say to people who did not agree with him.

You will find that in the Gospels Christ said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell" [23:33]. That was said to people who did not like His preaching. It is not really to my mind quite the best tone, and there are a great many of these things about Hell. There is, of course, the familiar text about the sin against the Holy Ghost: "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him neither in this World nor in the world to come" [12:32]. That text has caused an unspeakable amount of misery in the world, for all sorts of people have imagined that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and thought that it would not be forgiven them either in this world or in the world to come. I really do not think that a person with a proper degree of kindliness in his nature would have put fears and terrors of that sort into the world.

Then Christ says, "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" [13:41-42]; and He goes on about the wailing and gnashing of teeth. It comes in one verse after another, and it is quite manifest to the reader that there is a certain pleasure in contemplating wailing and gnashing of teeth, or else it would not occur so often. Then you all, of course, remember about the sheep and the goats; how at the second coming He is going to divide the sheep from the goats, and He is going

to say to the goats, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" [25:41]. He continues, "And these shall go away into everlasting fire" [25:46]. Then He says again, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" [18:8]. He repeats that again and again also. I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take Him as His chroniclers represent Him, would certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that.\*

There are other things of less importance. There is the instance of the Gadarene swine [8:28-32], where it certainly was not very kind to the pigs to put the devils into them and make them rush down the hill into the sea. You must remember that He was omnipotent, and He could have made the devils simply go away; but He chose to send them into the pigs. Then there is the curious story of the fig tree, which always rather puzzled me. You remember what happened about the fig tree. "He was hungry; and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came if haply He might find anything thereon; and when He came to it He found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it: 'No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever' ... and Peter ... saith unto Him: 'Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away' " [21:18-20]. This is a very curious story, because it was not the right time of year for figs, and you really could not blame the tree. I cannot myself

<sup>\*</sup>Russell could have quoted a few more of Jesus' sayings that hardly portray a loving and compassionate character. For instance, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, even life itself — such a person cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). (Eds.)

feel that either in the matter of wisdom or in the matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history. I think I should put Buddha and Socrates above Him in those respects.

#### The Emotional Factor

As I said before, I do not think that the real reason why people accept religion has anything to do with argumentation. They accept religion on emotional grounds. One is often told that it is a very wrong thing to attack religion, because religion makes men virtuous. So I am told; I have not noticed it. ...

That is the idea — that we should all be wicked if we did not hold to the Christian religion. It seems to me that the people who have held to it have been for the most part extremely wicked. You find this curious fact, that the more intense has been the religion of any period and the more profound has been the dogmatic belief, the greater has been the cruelty and the worse has been the state of affairs. In the so-called ages of faith, when men really did believe the Christian religion in all its completeness, there was the Inquisition, with all its tortures; there were millions of unfortunate women burned as witches; and there was every kind of cruelty practised upon all sorts of people in the name of religion.

You find as you look around the world that every single bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step toward the diminution of war, every step toward better treatment of the coloured races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized churches of the world.\* I say quite deliberately that

<sup>\*</sup> This remark is all the more important as in the Third World, Christian churches always try to portray themselves as agents of progress, justice, liberation, human rights, etc. Russell's next sentence sums up the issue. (Eds.)

the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world.

# How the Churches Have Retarded Progress

You may think that I am going too far when I say that that is still so. I do not think that I am. Take one fact. You will bear with me if I mention it. It is not a pleasant fact, but the churches compel one to mention facts that are not pleasant. Supposing that in this world that we live in today an inexperienced girl is married to a syphilitic man; in that case the Catholic Church says, "This is an indissoluble sacrament. You must endure celibacy or stay together. And if you stay together, you must not use birth control to prevent the birth of syphilitic children." Nobody whose natural sympathies have not been warped by dogma, or whose moral nature was not absolutely dead to all sense of suffering, could maintain that it is right and proper that that state of things should continue.

That is only an example. There are a great many ways in which, at the present moment, the church, by its insistence upon what it chooses to call morality, inflicts upon all sorts of people undeserved and unnecessary suffering. And of course, as we know, it is in its major part an opponent still of progress and improvement in all the ways that diminish suffering in the world, because it has chosen to label as morality a certain narrow set of rules of conduct which have nothing to do with human happiness; and when you say that this or that ought to be done because it would make for human happiness, they think that has nothing to do with the matter at all. "What has human happiness to do with morals? The object of morals is not to make people happy."

## Fear, the Foundation of Religion

Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly, as I have

said, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. Fear is the basis of the whole thing — fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand in hand. It is because fear is at the basis of those two things. In this world we can now begin a little to understand things, and a little to master them by help of science, which has forced its way step by step against the Christian religion, against the churches, and against the opposition of all the old precepts. Science can help us to get over this craven fear in which mankind has lived for so many generations. Science can teach us, and I think our own hearts can teach us, no longer to look around for imaginary supports, no longer to invent allies in the sky, but rather to look to our own efforts here below to make this world a better place to live in, instead of the sort of place that the churches in all these centuries have made it.

### What We Must Do

We want to stand upon our own feet and look fair and square at the world — its good facts, its bad facts, its beauties, and its ugliness; see the world as it is and be not afraid of it. Conquer the world by intelligence and not merely by being slavishly subdued by the terror that comes from it. The whole conception of God is a conception derived from the ancient Oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men. When you hear people in church debasing themselves and saying that they are miserable sinners, and all the rest of it, it seems contemptible and not worthy of self-respecting human beings. We ought to stand up and look the world frankly in the face. We ought to make the best we can of the world, and if it is not so good as we wish, after all it will still be better than what these others have made of it in all these ages. A good world needs knowledge, kindliness,

and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men. It needs a fearless outlook and a free intelligence. It needs hope for the future, not looking back all the time toward a past that is dead, which we trust will be far surpassed by the future that our intelligence can create.

#### 80 GB

# A "Godless Orthodoxy"

In "Why I Am Not A Christian," Bertrand Russell alludes to an affair that shook Britain; it was initiated by the publication in 1860 of a book innocently titled *Essays and Reviews*. Six of its seven authors were respected clerics who chose to criticize absurd aspects of the Bible and pleaded for a modern reinterpretation of the faith. One of them, for instance, rejected a literal interpretation of Genesis, while another (Rev. Mark Pattison) deplored that "a godless orthodoxy [now] threatens, as in the fifteenth century, to extinguish religious thought all together, and nothing is allowed in the Church of England but the formulae of past thinkings, which have long lost all sense of any kind." The book also endorsed Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which had appeared a year earlier (see the box on the evolutionary debate later in this Part 4). Significantly, one essay also rejected the Church doctrine of eternal punishment.

Essays and Reviews promptly provoked the fury of the clergy. Leading the attack, Samuel Wilberforce, bishop of Oxford, called the book "infidel" and "wanton." Its authors were soon branded the "Seven against Christ," accused of implying that the established church was "little more than a late legend founded upon a misconception," and threatened

with ecclesiastical courts. But as the fury grew, so did the sales. A nationwide debate ensued, in which the book received the support of pro-evolution scientists, including Darwin. One of the authors (Rev. Frederick Temple, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury), under pressure to dissociate himself from the book, protested in a letter to the bishop of London: "What can be a grosser superstition than the theory of literal inspiration [of the Bible]? But because that has a regular footing it is to be treated as a good man's mistake, while the courage to speak the truth about the first chapter of Genesis is a 'wanton' piece of wickedness."

In 1862, indicted for heresy and suspended from their offices, two of the authors appealed to the Judicial Committee of Britain's Privy Council. Despite the dissent of two prominent archbishops, it held that eternal damnation was not an essential tenet of the English Church and a clergyman could not be punished for hoping that the "wicked" might be pardoned by God. The furious archbishops then called on every clergyman in England and Ireland to sign a declaration affirming belief in the eternal punishment of hell; 11,000 signatures were collected and the archbishops also claimed the support of 137,000 laymen. Finally, Wilberforce obtained a synodical condemnation of the book. Propaganda had won; but the Church had once more lost the battle of ideas.

The cruel belief in eternal damnation is central to evangelization: if hell is not eternal, salvation loses its urgency and absolute character. And the missionary is out of business.

# WESTERN THINKERS ON CHRISTIANITY

A selection of thoughts from a few leading Western thinkers, arranged chronologically and covering four centuries (leaving aside the first author). These quotations — many more of which could be produced — amply demonstrate how the West's best minds saw through the institution called Christianity, and used the strongest language and the most biting irony to highlight its cruelty and absurdity. We present a brief selection here.

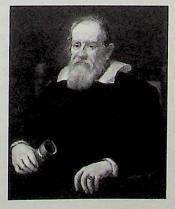
Celsus (or Celse), Roman author & critic of Christianity (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD)

He whom you [Christians] named Jesus was merely the leader of a gang of brigands; the miracles you attributed to him were but the operations of magic and esoteric deceptions. The truth is that those so-called facts are only myths you have yourselves made up, without however succeeding in giving your lies a veneer of credibility. Everyone knows very well that whatever you wrote

is the result of revisions made in response to criticisms against you. (*True Discourse*, AD 176)

Galileo, Italian astronomer and mathematician (1564-1642)

I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.



To command the professors of astronomy to confute their own observations is to enjoin an impossibility, for it is to command them not to see what they do see, and not to understand what they do understand, and to find what they do not discover.\* ... It vexes me when they [the Church authorities] would constrain science by the authority of the Scriptures, and yet do not consider themselves bound to answer reason and experiment. (The Authority of Scripture in Philosophical Controversies)

Jean Meslier, French Catholic priest and revolutionary author (1664-1729)

The first step toward humanity is to permit each one to follow peacefully the worship and the opinions which suit him. But such a conduct cannot please the ministers of religion, who wish to have the right to tyrannize over even the thoughts of men. Blind and bigoted princes, you hate, you persecute, you devote heretics to torture, because you are persuaded that these unfortunate ones displease God. But do you not claim that your God is full of kindness? How can you hope to please Him by such barbarous actions which He cannot help disapproving of? Besides, who told you that their opinions displease your God? Your priests told you! But who guarantees that your priests are not deceived themselves or that they do not wish to deceive you? It is these same priests! Princes! it is upon the perilous word of your priests that you commit the most atrocious and the most unheardof crimes, with the idea of pleasing the Deity! ... The Christians, under pretext of spreading their holy religion, covered the two hemispheres a hundred times with blood. (Superstition in All Ages)

<sup>\*</sup>Galileo alludes here to his recantation of heliocentrism, to which he was compelled when threatened of heresy by the Inquisition. (Eds.)

# Jonathan Swift, Irish author (1667-1745)

We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.

## Montesquieu, French philosopher (1689-1755)

The tribunal of the inquisition, formed by the Christian monks on the idea of the tribunal of penitence, is contrary to all good policy. It has everywhere met with a general dislike, and must have sunk under the oppositions it met with, if those who were resolved to establish it had not drawn advantages even from these oppositions. This tribunal is insupportable in all governments. In monarchies, it only makes informers and traitors; in republics, it only forms dishonest men; in a despotic state, it is as destructive as the government itself. (*The Spirit of Laws*)

\* ... You deprive yourselves of the advantage you have over the Mahometans, with respect to the manner in which their religion was established. When they boast of the number of their believers, you tell them that they have obtained them by violence, and that they have extended their religion by the sword: why then do you establish yours by fire? ... We conjure you, not by the mighty God whom both you and we serve, but by that Christ who, you tell us, took upon him a human form, to propose himself for an example for you to follow; we conjure you to behave to us, as he himself would behave was he upon earth. You would have us be Christians, and you will not be so yourselves. But if you will not be Christians, be at least men: treat us as you would, if having only the weak light of justice which nature bestows, you had

<sup>\*</sup>The following passage, from a chapter titled "A most humble Remonstrance to the Inquisitors of Spain and Portugal" was composed after a ten-year-old Jewish girl was burned at Lisbon in an *auto da fé*. Here, Montesquieu creates a Jewish character who addresses the Inquisition. (Eds.)

not a religion to conduct, and a revelation to enlighten you. ... If you have [the] truth, hide it not from us, by the manner in which you propose it. The characteristic of truth is its triumph over hearts and minds, and not that impotency which you confess, when you would force us to receive it by tortures. ... If you do not shake off your ancient prejudices ... it must be confessed that you are incorrigible, incapable of any degree of light, or instruction; and a nation must be very unhappy that gives authority to such men. ... If anyone in times to come shall dare to assert, that in the age in which we live, the people of Europe were civilized, you will be cited to prove that they were barbarians; and the idea they will have of you, will be such as will dishonour your age, and spread hatred over all your contemporaries. (The Spirit of Laws)

# Voltaire, French author and philosopher (1694-1778)

If we believe absurdities, we shall commit atrocities.

Christianity's divine teacher, living in humility and peace, preached forgiveness of insults; but his holy and gentle religion has become, through our madnesses, the most intolerant of all, and the most barbaric. (Essay on Customs)

The truths of religion are never so well understood as by those who have lost the power of reasoning. (*Philo-sophical Dictionary*)

Christianity is the most ridiculous, the most absurd and bloody religion that has ever infected the world. ... Where is the prince sufficiently educated to know that for seventeen hundred years the Christian sect has done nothing but harm? (Letters to Frederick the Great, 1767)

Pagan religion shed very little blood, while ours flooded the earth with it. (*Philosophical Dictionary, "Religion"*)

[Christianity] has deluged the earth with blood for the sake

of unintelligible sophisms. (Philosophical Dictionary, "Religion")

It is laughable how we are fooled on the question of martyrs. Titus, Trajan, Marcus Aurelus\* and other such models of virtue are depicted as monsters of cruelty. ... We find a hundred tales of that sort in martyrologies. ... But do you wish for real, well-attested barbarities, for real, well-noted massacres, for actual rivers of blood, for fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sucklings who did have their throats slit before being heaped up? Persecuting monsters, do not look for those true events in your annals: you will find them in the crusades against the Albigenses,\*\* in the massacres of Mérindol and Cabrières,\*\*\* in the dreadful day of the Saint Bartholomew,\*\*\*\* in the massacres of Ireland, in the valleys of the Vaudois. It hardly befits you, who are but barbarians. to impute extravagant cruelties to the best of emperors. you who have flooded Europe with blood and left it strewn with expiring bodies. ... Your still surviving Inquisition, does it not cause reason, nature and religion to shudder? (Philosophical Dictionary, "Martyr")

So many frauds, so many errors, so many disgusting

<sup>\*</sup> All three are Roman emperors alleged by the Church to have persecuted early Christians and made "martyrs" of some. Voltaire proceeds to give detailed accounts of fabricated tales of martyrdom. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Another name for the Cathars. See the box item "The Holy Inquisition" in Part 2. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Two towns of Southern France that were the scenes of massacres of Vaudois (or Waldenses), a Catholic sect regarded as heretic as it advocated a purer interpretation of the New Testament and condemned the Roman Catholic church for its corruption. Severely persecuted, in the sixteenth century they came close to the Protestants of Switzerland, where they took refuge. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> Known as the "massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day," 24-25 August 1572, when many thousands of Protestants were slaughtered across France at the instigation of the monarchy; Pope Gregory XIII had a medal struck to express his happiness. (Eds.)

blunders have deluged us for seventeen hundred years, yet have been unable to harm our religion. Doubtless it must be divine, since seventeen centuries of mischief and nonsense have failed to destroy it. (Essay on Customs)

Christianity lit the torches that reduced our cities to ashes, and furbished the swords that for so long covered our countryside with the corpses of our ancestors. (Defence of Lord Bolingbroke)

Goa is sadly famous for its Inquisition, which is contrary to humanity as much as to commerce. The Portuguese monks deluded us into believing that the [Indian] populace was worshipping the Devil, while it is they who have served him. (*Historical Fragments on India*)

# Benjamin Franklin, U.S. statesman, scientist and author (1706-90)

Every other sect supposes itself in possession of the truth, and that those who differ are so far in the wrong. Like a man traveling in foggy weather they see those at a distance before them wrapped up in a fog, as well as those behind them, and also people in the fields on each side; but near them, all appears clear, though in truth they are as much in the fog as any of them.

# David Hume, Scottish philosopher & historian (1711-76)

The Christian religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. (An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding)

# Diderot, French philosopher & Encyclopaedist (1713-84)

The philosopher has never killed any priests, whereas the priest has killed a great many philosophers.

The most dangerous madmen are those created by religion, and people whose aim is to disrupt society always

know how to make good use of them on occasion.

# George Washington, 1st president of the U.S. (1732-99)

I beg you be persuaded that no one would be more zealous than myself to establish effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny, and every species of religious persecution. (To United Baptists Churches of Virginia, 1789)

The blessed Religion revealed in the word of God will remain an eternal and awful monument to prove that the best Institutions may be abused by human depravity; and that they may even, in some instances, be made subservient to the vilest of purposes.

## John Adams, 2<sup>nd</sup> president of the U.S. (1735-1826)

I almost shudder at the thought of alluding to the most fatal example of the abuses of grief which the history of mankind has preserved — the Cross. Consider what calamities that engine of grief has produced! (Letter to Jefferson, 1816)

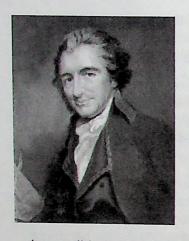
This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it.

# **Thomas Paine**, American author and revolutionary leader (1737-1809)\*

Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled,\*\* it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and

<sup>\*</sup> Except the last two, the following quotations are from *The Age of Reason*. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Paine is referring to the Old Testament here. (Eds.)



brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest everything that is cruel.

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too

impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists and fanatics. As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.

It has been the scheme of the Christian church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of government to hold him in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and admits of no conclusion.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church. All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

The church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty. . . . The word of god is the creation we behold: And it is in this word, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.

The New Testament compared with the Old, is like a farce of one act. ... There are some glaring contradictions, which ... are sufficient to show the story of Jesus Christ to be false.

The Bible and the Testament are impositions upon the world; the fall of man, the account of Jesus Christ being the Son of God, and of his dying to appease the wrath of God, and of salvation by that strange means, are all fabulous inventions, dishonourable to the wisdom and power of the Almighty. ...

Practical religion consists in doing good: and the only way of serving God is that of endeavoring to make His creation happy. All preaching that has not this for its object is nonsense and hypocrisy.

The Bible is a book that has been read more and examined less than any book that ever existed.

The age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system.

Condorcet, French philosopher & mathematician (1743-94)

The contempt of humanities was one of the first characteristics of Christianity. It needed to avenge the insult of philosophy; it feared that spirit of inquiry and doubt, that confidence in its own reason, the plague of all religious belief. It found the light of natural sciences obnoxious and suspect, for they were highly dangerous for the

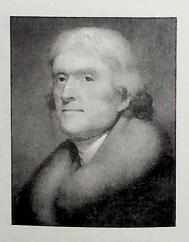
success of miracles. ... The triumph of Christianity signalled the whole decadence of sciences and of philosophy. (Outline of a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind)

### Jean-Paul Marat, French revolutionary (1743-93)

Every religion has lent its hand to despotism; however, I know none that favours despotism as much as Christianity has done. (*The Chains of Slavery*)

**Thomas Jefferson**, 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. president & statesman (1743-1826)

Is uniformity attainable? Millions of innocent men, women and children since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth. (Notes on the State of Virginia)



I have recently been examining all the known superstitions of the world, and do not find in our particular superstition [Christianity] one redeeming feature. They are all alike founded on fables and mythology.

The Christian god is a three-headed monster; cruel, vengeful and capricious. If one wishes to know more of this raging, three-headed beast-like god, one only needs to look at the caliber of people who say they serve him. They are always of two classes: fools and hypocrites.

James Madison, 4th U.S. president and political theorist (1751-1836)

During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What has been its fruits? More or less, in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution. (Memorial and Remonstrance)

In no instance have ... the churches been guardians of the liberties of the people.

The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries.

Madame de Staël, French author and political activist (1766-1817)

Pagans divinized life; Christians divinized death. (Corinne or Italy)

# Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher (1788-1860)

In comparison with the ages of Christianity the ancient world was unquestionably less cruel than the Middle Age, with its deaths by exquisite torture, its innumerable burnings at the stake. ... Think of the fanaticism, the endless persecutions, the religious wars, that sanguinary frenzy of which the ancients had no conception! think of the crusades, a butchery lasting two hundred years and inexcusable, its war cry "It is the will of God," its object to gain possession of the grave of one who preached love and sufferance! think of the cruel expulsion and extermination of the Moors and Jews from Spain! think of the orgies of blood, the inquisitions, the heretical tribunals, the bloody and terrible conquests of the Mohammedans in three continents, or those of Christianity in America, whose inhabitants were for the

most part, and in Cuba entirely, exterminated. According to Las Casas, Christianity murdered twelve millions in forty years, of course all *in majorem Dei gloriam* [for God's greater glory], and for the propagation of the Gospel, and because what wasn't Christian wasn't even looked upon as human! ... (*Religion: A Dialogue*)

And above all, don't let us forget India, the cradle of the human race, or at least of that part of it to which we belong, where first Mohammedans, and then Christians, were most cruelly infuriated against the adherents of the original faith of mankind. The destruction or disfigurement of the ancient temples and idols, a lamentable, mischievous and barbarous act, still bears witness to the monotheistic fury of the Mohammedans, ... whom the Portuguese Christians have zealously imitated by destruction of temples and the auto da fé of the inquisition at Goa. ... Truly, it is the worst side of religions that the believers of one religion have allowed themselves every sin again those of another, and with the utmost ruffianism and cruelty persecuted them; the Mohammedans against the Christians and Hindoos; the Christians against the Hindoos, Mohammedans, American natives, Negroes, Jews, heretics, and others. ... Perhaps I go too far in saying all religions. For the sake of truth, I must add that the fanatical enormities perpetrated in the name of religion are only to be put down to the adherents of monotheistic creeds, that is, the Jewish faith and its two branches, Christianity and Islamism. We hear of nothing of the kind in the case of Hindoos and Buddhists. (Religion: A Dialogue)

Frances Wright, U.S. pioneer of feminism, critic of Christianity and of slavery (1795-1852)

So far from entrenching human conduct within the gentle barriers of peace and love, religion has ever been, and now is, the deepest source of contentions, wars,

persecutions for conscience sake, angry words, angry feelings, backbitings, slanders, suspicions, false judgments, evil interpretations, unwise, unjust, injurious, inconsistent actions. (*Life, Letters and Lectures*)

Turn your churches into halls of science, exchange your teachers of faith for expounders of nature. ... Fill the vacuum of your mind!

#### Alfred de Vigny, French poet (1797-1863)

Buddha's perfection is more beautiful than that of Christianity, because it is more disinterested. (A Poet's Diary)

## Ralph Waldo Emerson, U.S. essayist, philosopher & poet (1803-82)

The torpidity on the side of religion of the vigorous English understanding, shows how much wit and folly can agree in one brain. Their religion is a quotation; their church is a doll; and any examination is interdicted with screams of terror. In good company, you expect them to laugh at the fanaticism of the vulgar; but they do not: they are the vulgar. (English Traits)

In Christendom where is the Christian? (Self-Reliance)

#### Ludwig Feuerbach, German philosopher (1804-72)

Because God suffers and because of the manner in which he suffers, man must suffer in turn. The Christian religion is the religion of suffering. (*The Essence of Christianity*)

#### Auguste Blanqui, French socialist politician (1805-81)

Catholicism is the tomb of intelligence, of thought, of brain; Protestantism, the tomb of conscience, of feeling, of heart.

#### John Stuart Mill, British philosopher (1806-73)

The *nec plus ultra* [highest point] of wickedness is embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity. (*Autobiography*)

#### Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the U.S. (1809-65)

The Bible is not my Book and Christianity is not my religion. I could never give assent to the long complicated statements of Christian dogma.

#### Charles Darwin, British naturalist (1809-82)

I can hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother, and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine. (The autobiography of Charles Darwin)

## Elizabeth Cady Stanton, U.S. leader of the woman's rights movement (1815-1902)

The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of woman's emancipation. (*Free Thought Magazine*, September 1896)

The memory of my own suffering has prevented me from ever shadowing one young soul with the superstitions of the Christian religion. . . . I found nothing grand in the history of the Jews nor in the morals inculcated in the Pentateuch. Surely the writers had a very low idea of the nature of their god. They made him not only anthropomorphic, but of the very lowest type, jealous and revengeful, loving violence rather than mercy. I know of no other books that so fully teach the subjection and degradation of women. (Eighty Years and More)

#### Walt Whitman, U.S. poet & essayist (1819-92)

They [animals] do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God ...
(Leaves of Grass)

## Susan B. Anthony, U.S. pioneer of the woman suffrage movement (1820-1906)

I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do because I notice it always coincides with their own desires.

## Matilda Joslyn Gage, U.S. leader of the woman's rights movement (1826-98)

Christianity has been of very little value in advancing civilization, but has done a great deal toward retarding it. ... Slavery and prostitution, persecutions for heresy, the inquisition with its six hundred modes of torture, the destruction of learning, the oppression of science, the systematized betraval of confiding innocence, the recognized and unrecognised polygamy of man, the denial to woman of a right to herself, her thought, her wages, her children, to a share in the government which rules her, to an equal part in religious institutions, all these and a myriad more are parts of what is known as Christian civilization. Not has the church ever been the leader in great reforms. During the anti-slavery conflict the American church was known as "the bulwark of American slavery." ... Penitentiaries and prisons, asylums and reformatories, all institution of a repressive character which the church prides itself as having built up, are no less evil than the convents, monasteries and the religious orders belonging to it. (Woman, Church and State)

**Robert Green Ingersoll**, U.S. politician and lecturer (1833-99)\*

With soap, baptism is a good thing. (Ingersoll's Lecture on the Review of His Reviewers)

The clergy know that I know that they know that they do not know.

If all the historic books of the Bible were blotted from the memory of mankind, nothing of value would be lost.

To hate man and worship god seems to be the sum of all the creeds.

The murder of [Giordano] Bruno will never, in my judgment, be completely and perfectly revenged until from the city of Rome shall be swept every vestige of priests and pope — until from the shapeless ruins of St. Peter's, the crumbled Vatican and the fallen cross of Rome, rises a monument sacred to the philosopher, the benefactor and the martyr — Bruno. (Ingersoll's Lecture on the Great Infidels)

Christianity did not come with tidings of great joy, but with a message of eternal grief. It came with the threat of everlasting torture on its lips. It meant war on earth and perdition hereafter.

The doctrine of eternal punishment is the infamy of infamies. As I have often said, the man who believes in eternal torment, in the justice of endless pain, is suffering from at least two diseases — petrifaction of the heart and putrefaction of the brain.

The Catholic have always been in favor of education — that is to say, of education enough to make a Catholic out of a heathen. It is also admitted that Protestants have always been in favor of enough education to make a Protestant out of a Catholic. Many schools and many

<sup>\*</sup>Except for the first five, the quotations are from "A Christmas Sermon."

colleges have been established [in the U.S.A.] for the spread of what is called the Gospel and for the education of the clergy. Presbyterians have founded schools for the benefit of their creed. The Methodists have established colleges for the purpose of making Methodists. The same is true of nearly all the sects. As a matter of fact, these schools have in many important directions hindered rather than helped the cause of real education. The pupils were not taught to investigate for themselves. They were not allowed to think. They were told that thought is dangerous. They were stuffed and crammed with creeds — with the ideas of others. Their credulity was applauded and their curiosity condemned. If all the people had been educated in these sectarian schools, all the people would have been far more ignorant than they are. These schools have been, and most of them still are, the enemies of higher education, and just to the extent that they are under the control of theologians they are hindrances, and just to the extent that they have become secularized they have been and are a benefit.

If Christianity — Catholic and Protestant — could have had its way, the works of Voltaire, Spinoza, Hume, Paine, Humboldt, Darwin, Haeckel, Spencer, Comte, Huxley, Tyndall, Draper, Goethe, Gibbon, Buckle and Buchner would not have been published. In short, the philosophy that enlightens and the fiction that enriches the brain would not exist.

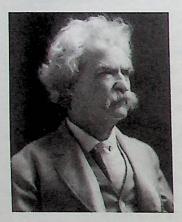
#### Mark Twain, U.S. author (1835-1910)

It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.

Our Bible reveals to us the character of our god with minute and remorseless exactness. ... It is perhaps the most damnatory biography that exists in print anywhere. It makes Nero an angel of light and leading by contrast. (Reflections on Religion)

Man is a Religious Animal. He is the only Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion — several of them. He is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat if his theology isn't straight.

[The Bible is] a mass of fables and traditions, mere mythology.



There is one notable thing about our Christianity: bad, bloody, merciless, money-grabbing and predatory as it is — in our country particularly, and in all other Christian countries in a somewhat modified degree — it is still a hundred times better than the Christianity of the Bible, with its prodigious crime — the invention of Hell. Measured by our Christianity of to-day, bad

as it is, hypocritical as it is, empty and hollow as it is, neither the Deity nor His Son is a Christian, nor qualified for that moderately high place. Ours is a terrible religion. The fleets of the world could swim in spacious comfort in the innocent blood it has spilt. (*Reflections on Religion*)

If Christ were here now there is one thing he would not be — a Christian. (*Notebook*)

During many ages there were witches. The Bible said so. The Bible commanded that they should not be allowed to live. Therefore the Church, after doing its duty in but a lazy and indolent way for eight hundred years, gathered up its halters, thumbscrews, and firebrands, and set about its holy work in earnest. She worked hard at it night and day during nine centuries and imprisoned, tortured, hanged, and burned whole hordes and armies

of witches, and washed the Christian world clean with their foul blood. Then it was discovered that there was no such thing as witches, and never had been. One does not know whether to laugh or to cry. ... There are no witches. The witch text remains; only the practice has changed. Hell fire is gone, but the text remains. Infant damnation is gone, but the text remains. More than two hundred death penalties are gone from the law books, but the texts that authorized them remain. (*Europe and Elsewhere*)

Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company.

Chief Joseph, chief of one band of Nez Percé Indians (1840-1904)

We do not want churches because they will teach us to quarrel about God, as the Catholics and Protestants do. We do not want that. We may quarrel with men about things on earth, but we never quarrel about the Great Spirit.

#### Ambrose Bierce, U.S. satirical writer (1842-1914)

Christian: One who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor. One who follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin.

Clergyman: A man who undertakes the management of our spiritual affairs as a method of bettering his temporal ones.

Faith: Belief without evidence in what is told by one who speaks without knowledge, of things without parallel.

<sup>\*</sup> All the following definitions are taken from Bierce's famous Devil's Dictionary (1906).

Impiety: Your irreverence toward my deity.

**Infidel**: In New York, one who does not believe in the Christian religion; in Constantinople, one who does.

Saint: A dead sinner revised and edited.

Occident: The part of the world lying west (or east) of the Orient. It is largely inhabited by Christians, a powerful subtribe of the Hypocrites, whose principal industries are murder and cheating, which they are pleased to call "war" and "commerce." These, also, are the principal industries of the Orient.

#### Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher (1844-1900)

I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct for revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, petty — I call it the one mortal blemish of mankind.

The Christian resolution to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad.

One does well to put on gloves when reading the New Testament. The proximity of so much uncleanliness almost forces one to do this. (*The Antichrist*)

#### Anatole France, French author (1844-1924)

The Christian God was once a Jew. Now he is an anti-Semite. (Letter to the Freethought Congress at Paris, 1905)

Oscar Wilde, British playwright and author (1854-1900)

When I think of all the harm the Bible has done, I despair of ever writing anything to equal it.

#### George Bernard Shaw, British dramatist (1856-1950)

No man ever believes that the Bible means what it says; he is always convinced that it says what he means.

Christianity might be a good thing if anyone ever tried it.

#### Joseph Conrad, English author (1857-1924)

Christianity ... has brought an infinity of anguish to innumerable souls on this earth.

#### Jean Jaurès, French socialist leader (1859-1914)

We fight against the Church and Christianity because they are the negation of human right and contain a principle of human enslavement.

#### H. G. Wells, English author (1866-1946)

[The Roman Catholic church] stands for everything most hostile to the mental emancipation and stimulation of mankind. (Crux Ansata — An Indictment of the Roman Catholic Church)

Albeit [Christianity] originated in a passionate assertion of the conception of brotherly equality, it relapsed steadily from the broad nobility of its beginnings and passed over at last almost completely to the side of persecution and the pleasures of cruelty. (Crux Ansata — An Indictment of the Roman Catholic Church)

It [Christianity] has littered the beaches of life with churches, cathedrals, shrines and crucifixes, prejudices and intolerances, like the sea urchin and starfish and empty shells and lumps of stinging jelly upon the sands here after a tide. A tidal wave out of Egypt. And it has left a multitude of little wriggling theologians and confessors and apologists hopping and burrowing in the warm nutritious sand. . . . (Experiment in Autobiography)

#### André Gide, French author (1869-1951)

Christianity, above all, comforts; but some souls are naturally happy and do not need to be comforted. So Christianity first makes those unhappy, as it has otherwise no action on them. (*Journal*, 1893)

## **Bertrand Russell**, British mathematician and philosopher (1872-1970)

So far as I can remember, there is not one word in the Gospels in praise of intelligence.

I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world. (Why I Am Not a Christian)

I think all this doctrine [of Christ], that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take Him as His chroniclers represent Him, would certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that. (Why I Am Not a Christian)

The Christian view that all intercourse outside marriage is immoral was, as we see in the passages from St. Paul, based upon the view that all sexual intercourse, even within marriage, is regrettable. A view of this sort, which goes against biological facts, can only be regarded by sane people as a morbid aberration. The fact that it is embedded in Christian ethics has made Christianity throughout its whole history a force tending towards mental disorders and unwholesome views of life. (Marriage and Morals)

#### Albert Einstein, U.S. physicist (1879-1955)

I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the

objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own — a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. (*New York Times*, 9 November 1930)

I am convinced that some political and social activities and practices of the Catholic organizations are detrimental and even dangerous for the community as a whole, here and everywhere. I mention here only the fight against birth control at a time when overpopulation in various countries has become a serious threat to the health of people and a grave obstacle to any attempt to organize peace on this planet. (From a letter of 1954)

#### Will Durant, U.S. historian and philosopher (1885-1981)

The Institutional Church (ecclesia) has killed only two kinds of people: Those who do not believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and those who do.

#### Helge Krog, Norwegian dramatist, 1889-1962

The Church accepts progress wherever it can no longer stop it. (*Aphorismes*)

#### Louis Aragon, French poet and essayist (1897-1982)

When Christian darkness fell on the Western world, man barely dared to think anything anymore. (*The French Diane*)

#### C. S. Lewis, British author (1898-1963)

Of all bad men religious bad men are the worst.

I think we must fully face the fact that when Christianity does not make a man very much better, it makes him very much worse. ... Conversion may make of one who was, if no better, no worse than an animal, something like a devil. (From a letter to Bede Griffiths of 20 December 1961)

Louis Scutenaire, Belgian surrealist author (1905-87)

The existence of Christians proves the non-existence of God. (My Inscriptions)

Émile Michel Cioran, French thinker and author (1911-95)

The Judeo-Christian monotheism is the Stalinism of Antiquity. (*Notebooks*)

Albert Camus, French author (1913-60)

Christianity thinks that because of the direction it gives to the world, it combats nihilism, while in reality it is itself nihilistic insofar as, by imposing an imaginary meaning on life, it prevents the discovery of life's real meaning. (*The Rebel*)

Gore Vidal, U.S. novelist (1925-)

I'm a born-again atheist.

I regard monotheism as the greatest disaster ever to befall the human race. I see no good in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam — good people, yes, but any religion based on a single, well, frenzied and virulent god, is not as useful to the human race as, say, Confucianism, which is not a religion but an ethical and educational system. (At Home)

Once people get hung up on theology, they've lost sanity forever. More people have been killed in the name of Jesus Christ than any other name in the history of the world. (Secular Humanist Bulletin, Summer 1995)

Christianity is such a silly religion. (*Time magazine,* September 28, 1992)

Noam Chomsky, U.S. linguist and political critic (1928-)

The Bible is one of the most genocidal books in history.

#### Steven Weinberg, U.S. physicist (1933-)

Religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion. (April 1999 speech, Washington, DC)

#### Carl Sagan, U.S. astronomer (1934-96)

In Italy, the Inquisition was condemning people to death until the end of the eighteenth century, and inquisitional torture was not abolished in the Catholic Church until 1816. The last bastion of support for the reality of witchcraft and the necessity of punishment has been the Christian churches. (*The Demon-Haunted World*)

#### Stephen Jay Gould, U.S. evolutionary biologist (1941-2002)

The argument that the literal story of Genesis can qualify as science collapses on three major grounds: the creationists' need to invoke miracles in order to compress the events of the earth's history into the biblical span of a few thousand years; their unwillingness to abandon claims clearly disproved, including the assertion that all fossils are products of Noah's flood; and their reliance upon distortion, misquote, half-quote, and citation out of context to characterize the ideas of their opponents. (The Verdict on Creationism)

Nothing is more dangerous than a dogmatic worldview — nothing more constraining, more blinding to innovation, more destructive of openness to novelty. (*Dinosaur in a Haystack*)

#### Michel Onfray, French philosopher (1959-)

Too many Christian centuries have taught that women were nothing, less than nothing, the dregs of humanity, soulless, unworthy of consideration, sinful, temptresses, and more such twaddle.... Christians appear to be more gifted for resentment and hatred than for loving their neighbour. (Fierce Philosophy)

You shall not kill ... except once in a while — whenever the Church tells you to. (*Treatise of Atheology*)

#### A Native American Woman

If you take the Christian bible and put it out in the wind and the rain, soon the paper on which the words are printed will disintegrate and the words will be gone. Our bible Is the wind and the rain. (Noted by herbalist Carol McGrath)

80 03

## THEO-DIVERSITY AND HUMANE VALUES

#### Prof. Lokesh Chandra

Several Indian thinkers have also critiqued Christianity. Although their work is not as well known as that of their Western counterparts, it often touches deeper, unfettered by the crude Judeo-Christian concept of divinity. The late Ram Swarup was a pioneer in the field, and his Hindu View of Christianity and Islam\* is fundamental for those who wish to acquire a Hindu perspective of the Abrahamic or Semitic religions.

The present essay, written in 2001, is by a renowned Indologist, art historian and expert on Buddhism, with over 360 books to his credit.\*\*

The dawned twenty-first century demands new structures of thought, spirituality, and nature harmonizing in the beauty of life, in the immensity (*virat*) of the cosmos that envelops us in its embrace of Divinity (not God), and in the open natural spaces of the unknown:

What I shall never know I must make known. Where travellers never went Is my domain.

<sup>\*</sup> Ram Swarup Hindu View of Christianity and Islam (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1992). See also his seminal Pope John Paul II on Eastern Religions and Yoga: a Hindu-Buddhist Rejoinder (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1995)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Among Prof. Lokesh Chandra's books, we may mention *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography, Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary* (7 vols.), *Cultural Horizons of India* (7 vols.), all published by Aditya Prakashan (New Delhi). We have borrowed this essay from www.ifih.org.

No shadows of dogma, no imprisonment in the deadening certainty of Revelation, no cutting down the venerable oaktrees of centuries for bushes, no verdicts of suicidal decisions donning lineaments of religion, no drowning the flow of time, no omnipotence of God that strangulates the flux of time, choice and *punya*.

#### 1. Diversity Is the Law of Nature

Biodiversity is the supreme law of nature. There are over a hundred thousand species of flora and fauna in India alone, more than a lakh of forms of plant and animal life in our country. Likewise, the spiritual life has to divine the several meanings, the fuzzy wisdom of nature, the light of the Many, and to image the sacrament that enshrines the Multiple, the Changing, the Silent. Let us not wound the years with "The Only True One." The One has to become the Many, ekoham bahu syam. Theo-diversity is an inescapable corollary to the astounding discoveries in science and their universal applications in technology. Theo-diversity alone will ensure the ascension of humanity to light and nobility that makes Joy not an attribute of the spirit, but its essential nature (sac-cidananda). Our century seeks a creative and imaginative reflection on the spiritual destiny of humankind, away from the disembodiment of the human at the altar of monocentric theism. Theo-diversity will lead us to the spontaneity of the fountains of the mind, bring light to eyes long blind, and we may say:

I observed The designing of gods.

Our world has been conditioned by two major currents of theism, one emanating from the agricultural and the other from pastoral civilizations. We will have to analyze their etiology and teleology, their origins and purposes, to comprehend their historic impact, as well as their relevance to an emerging world where the role of environment is getting modified. Today humanity seeks the music of the creative and the Many, rather than that of the frozen and the One, in the inexhaustible riches of Joy standing at the threshold of an archetypal world, that is, on the threshold of the *Dharmadhatu*.

#### 2. Desert versus River

The three great traditions of (i) Judaism, (ii) Christianity, and (iii) Islam crystallized in arid zones. The desert is a vast stretch of sand, in its imperial majesty of the immense, and overwhelming in its logic of the ONE: all that the eyes see is ONE monotone. It is boiling in the day and freezing at night, with man feeling its oppressive extremes of temperature. It is violence incarnate, violence sans end. It leaves its deep impress on the mind: rigidity, fixity, and obstinacy.

Indic religions arose on the banks of rivers with waters flowing. Flow symbolized change, evolution was a prime component of its inner dynamics. The flow of waters was sacred (ta amruta apaha Chand. 3.1.2, apsu purushastamevahamupase Kaus. 4.10). This flux or change was integral to Dharma. The waters flowed because of the banks of rivers. If there were no banks the waters would not flow, they would slush into marshes. Inner ethics are the banks of the spiritual universe. Samskara holds the Dharmadhatu.

#### 3. Monocentrism versus Polycentrism

The desert with its endless and unvarying landscape sublimated the immensity of the One Vast Sand into The One Ultimate. The Single Highest became the crowning extreme. Extremism is inbuilt in monotheism. The prophet Isaiah comforted his companions in exile that Jahweh is not merely the God of Israel, but "The Only God" that doeth all things.... He is the one, perfect, immutable. When someone asked what God

did before the world was created, St. Augustine answered, "He made a hell for the inquisitive." Monotheism is a theological term, and Theodore M. Ludwig says that it cannot include other traditions, except Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Polycentrism emphasizes the principle of Many, and merges divine reality with the world. It is a plurality of divine forces functioning in life and nature. While the monotheistic God has "unlimited authority," polycentrism is value, integration of meaning, the possibility of multiplicity of perceptions at the highest levels of spiritual perfection. In 1935 Erik Peterson in his essay Monotheismus als Politisches Problem analyzed monotheism as a political problem. French thinkers like Alain de Benoist seek a neo-pagan resurgence as a new location of the sacred in plurality and freedom of human life. Polycentrism is the bridge leading to the immortal being (Amritasyaisha setuhu), to live and move and have its Joy (ananda) in consciousness in the Many of the world. Those of tranguil mind realize within their souls the Being who manifests one essence in a multiplicity of forms (ekam rupam bahudha yah karoti).

#### 4. Revelation (adeshana) versus Realization (sadhana)

Revelation is divine communication to human beings through one Prophet. It is a condescension. It is believed to be the "highest possible degree of perfection." It operates in three steps: (i) assertion, (ii) negation, (iii) re-assertion:

- (i) assertion in the scripture;
- (ii) negation of those opposed
  (Apostle Paul says: "They did not honour him as God... Their senseless minds were darkened,"
  Rom. 1:21); and
- (iii) reassertion in their suppression ("The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men," Rom. 1:18).

The Taliban and their transoceanic mentors are carrying out the Revelation in their love of God. Being divine in origin, Revelation cannot be altered.

Realization (sadhana) is to visualize the harmony between man's spirit and the divine spirit of the universe, in the living growth of nature. It is a sublime quest of the Infinite. It is a rising towards higher and nobler freedom of consciousness. In Realization man ascends into a luminous vision of perfection, while in Revelation he has to accede to imperatives. Realization is a caress of the heart to the world in the inner sky of consciousness, in the cidakasa (yadetad hridayam mama tadastu hridayam tava). There are no pagans, no infidels in sadhana or Realization.

While in Revelation Man is in the image of God, in Realization gods are in the image of Man. Revelation is steeped in theism which "suggested that man's life on earth was significant only in so far as it affected his soul's expectation of God's mercy after death."

The Indo-European attitude of mind as reflected in Classical Greek and Roman writers attaches primary importance to man. The humanists of the Renaissance were against the belittling of human life and asserted its intrinsic value. The basic mind-ground of Realization (*sadhana*) is the greatness of human potentialities, the faring in the Grand of the universes (*shariramadyam khalu dharma sadhanam*). Realization is the ineffable serenity of Becoming, of which no predicate is possible.

#### 5. Commandments versus Transcendence

The Ten Commandments were spoken to Moses by God. Moses is the mouthpiece of God. The first commandment is an uncompromising prohibition of the worship of any deity other than God. It introduces intolerance. The supremacy of God vis-à-vis man minimizes the importance of human life, and makes human beings the helpless play-beings of God.

They have to wage crusades and its likes. In the paradigm of Transcendence, each person is unique, who chooses, thinks and contemplates. Existence rises into transcendence. Man becomes man-in-the-universe, "crossing the limiting barriers of the individual, to become more than man" (Tagore). Brahman of the Upanishads is the subtle reality of all things that exist, the very "beingness" of all beings, including the human being. It is the ennobling of man (ud yanam te purusa, RV) as contradistinguished from his compliance with Commandments. Transcendence is seeking, while the Commandments demand unquestioning submission. Processes of enlightenment are replaced by regimentation. The Vaisesika-sutra 1.1.2 defines Dharma as the attainment of the cosmic and a-cosmic summum (yatobhyudaya-nihsreyasasiddhihi sa dharmaha). It is man who apprehends God and becomes Brahman. Man becomes immense in the highest abiding Joy (Ananda). Life and the Supreme are one. Existence and transcendence harmonize in wisdom. Man is made responsible for his deeds or karma (punyo vai punyena karmana bhavati, Brh. 5.2.13). There is no word for the positive punya in Abrahamic religions but only for the negative word papa, "sin."

#### 6. Absolute versus Relative

As Revelation is the truth made known to man by God, and as it is specially revealed in the history of the people nearest to him, Revelation is both absolute and the kingdom of God is the eternal kingdom. It has given rise to the mindset of the West that their kingdom is Absolute, and it is their imperative right to bring this "one river of truth" to all. The pageant of nature and history can derive its meaning only from them. This monocentrism is the foundation of the thoughts and actions of the Euro-American West to this day. Max Weber began his Essays on the Sociology of Religion with a statement of the uniqueness and universal importance of "Western" culture and civilization. The "inalienable rights and an indis-

pensable moral responsibility" arising from the Revelation are responsible for the concept of "globalization."

In the riverine cultures, time and place have a role to play. All becomes relative, multiformity is part of the cosmic interplay of forces. Thus we have *yuga-dharma*, or the Buddhist concept of interdependent origination (*pratttya-samutpada*). Humanity is an end, and never a means.

#### 7. Dogma versus Enlightenment

Dogma is to judge by the Scripture. The Westminster Confession clearly states: "The whole counsel of God ... man's salvation, faith and life is expressly set down in scripture ... unto which nothing may be added." There can be no other. It is a total denial of alterity. Alterity is paganism.

In the polycentric riverine religious traditions, the other is the outside of the inside, the dream space of interiorization. The outside is ever becoming the inside.

Important coordinates of Indic systems were:

Jijnasa or "the quest of illumination";

Jijivisha or "the striving to live, the will to live," and

Athato brahma-jijnasa: the desire to be illumined is human. Kurvann eveha karmani jijiviset satam samaha, "performing works one should wish to live a hundred years." Life and the world are the integrity of the Brahman. All is the efflorescence of the pure lotus-heart. Atman and Paramatman are the flowering of the human mind and the enrichment of man's life. Striving, toiling and singing "take me across," this shore and the other shore are one in the completeness that is in me. The Prajnaparamita-hridaya-sutra says: gate-gate para-gate para-sangate bodhi svaha. It is an effort to attain auto-consciousness in the blending of a vision (darsana) and a realization (sadhana): thus I remain the free author of

my future. The Decalogue or Ten Commandments were written on two tablets of stone by God Himself and even with His finger (Deut. 4:13). There could be no variation, and none other, when God stepped in.

#### 8. Religious Citadels versus Cathedrals of Silence

Spiritual otherness in contradistinction to spiritual universality, exclusion versus inclusion, mark a basic difference in traditions crystallizing along rivers and those arising in arid zones. The natural end results of agricultural and pastoral mindscapes are counteractive. The banishment of a God by monocentric Marxism, led to an analysis of its dialectics. Prof. Ernest Gellner of the London School of Economics has pointed out that the logic of pastoralism is resistance to domination and imposing itself on others. The pastoral vocation to violence arises from the very nature of pastoralism. Consider a shepherd with his 200 odd sheep or goats. He can double his wealth by the simple device of bashing in the head of the neighbouring shepherd, who is endowed with a similar herd of flock. The attractiveness of doing so is incomparably greater than a similar act of aggression amongst neighbouring agriculturists. Seizing the land of another is worthwhile only if the land is scarce and one disposes of the labour to till it. Pastoralism is not labour-intensive, but defence-intensive. For cohesion it seeks a high Military and Political Participation Ratio (MPPR). The second important characteristic is a tendency towards a religio-martial aristocracy, expressed in transcendent terms of a Prophet. He provides the moral idiom to organic solidarity. Thirdly, the ideological equipment of religion is its outer bulwark. The outer bulwark protects the central citadel of the faith. These bulwarks, howsoever untenable in the modern world, cannot be abandoned, as the residual inner citadel alone would not be defensible.

On the other hand, in Indic tradition there are empty spaces, primeval forests with no walls or boundaries, constant

interface with the varying aspects of the vast life of nature, and no absolute isolation. This gave rise to enlarging consciousness by growing into the surrounds, and harmony between man and nature. The Rigveda says that the wise found the bonds of being in non-being (sato bandhum asati niravindan hrdi pratisya kavayo manisa) in the famous nasadiya hymn (10.129). It is sunyata in Buddhism as "openness," "non-substantiality," "relativity." Desires and fears, you and me exist and evolve in interrelationship. The enrichment of religious diversity can be assured only in the deepest awareness of existence, in an overbrimming potential of "openness," e.g. in the Avatamsaka formulations of Fa-tsang, the Chinese guru of the seventh century.

#### 9. Human Rights versus Humane Values

Human rights, like "workers of the world unite," are fast becoming an instrument of superpower domination. They emerge from a monocentric commitment to impose a sacred disorder. The Korean thinker Prof. Lee O-young, in his write-up on *New Wave of the Twenty-First Century*, minces no words: "We need an alternative to the Judeo-Christian tradition, which views humankind above and apart from Nature and ruling over it according to God's design." Human Rights is an Abrahamic formulation which seeks to buy the freshness of the air and the sparkle of water with a gun in hand. The Chief Seattle of the Dwamish tribe wrote to the President of the United States in 1854:

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people.

Every shining needle, every sandy shore,

Every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and
humming insect

Is holy in the memory and experience of my people.

The riverine cultures seek "Humane Values," as distinguished from nebulous human values. Out of them will flow "human

duties" and thence "human rights." We need new moral maps, new mental models, without the intrusion of the "onward march of secularization" of Prof. Roland Robertson of the University of Pittsburg.

#### 10. Complementarity and Symbolic Hermeneutics

The nature and presuppositions of the interpretation of scriptures is technically known as hermeneutics, from the Greek god Hermes who is the messenger of the gods and the deity of boundaries. Interpretation conditions the beliefs of the audience. It can be the understanding of the linguistic forms in the conditions and time of its writing down of the scripture. This reflects the cultures and political sensitivity of a bygone and has to be accepted as belief or dogma. It is termed nitartha in Buddhist hermeneutics. It ceases to be creative, it is irrelevant to the Zeitgeist or Spirit of our Times, and preempts an intuitive leap. T. S. Eliot wrote an essay on Tradition and Individual Talent in 1919. He argued that a text has its afterlife independent of its author. There are profound connections of symbols with human life as a part of a living cosmos. The linguistic intent cannot be the sole norm of meaning, if the scripture has to live and be a part of life. A scripture has to become endowed with reflective consciousness in its encounter with new horizons, without becoming final and dictatorial. Textual and historical constraints have to be resolved in a hermeneutic flow of conceptual thinking and intuitive realization (jnana and vijnana). The Buddhist theory of two levels of meaning is nitartha, "explicit or selfevident meaning," and neyartha, "implicit or interpretable meaning." Candrakirti explains seven basic principles of interpretation which he terms saptalankara. From the planes or levels of literal or surface meaning to the ultimate meaning are the advancing stages of spiritual growth. The message has to be adapted to the needs and faculties of living beings. The meanings are a function of life and not of a scripture. The

immaculate birth of Jesus Christ has pre-echoes in the nativity of the Buddha. Buddhism did not theologize it as a dogma. It was transcending existence, but did not disturb the actualities of life. It was to feel something of the highest value, away from the mercy of words. The hermeneutics of our century has to move on the bedrock of *our* being, and not be a petrifaction of scriptural authority.

#### 11. Frontiers versus Horizons

Frontiers create barriers in human understanding. An unchanging holy domain, rooted in the immutable word, in wordliness worked out in painstaking detail in rigid theological structures, breeds a closed sacrum, which has to be defended with all one's might. Subject to the exigencies of power, it has to own aggressiveness and the vitality of violence.

Instead of frontiers, this century needs open horizons, where people are "sculptors of themselves," to invoke the light and lyricism that lives in our life. As the great poetess of Kashmir Lallesvari says: "From the outward enter into the most inward part of thy being." The beyond and the within has to be a flow:

Ramata jogi bahata pani Hai is jag ki itni kahani

## 12. How Long Shall We Seek Western Confirmation?

Prof. Perceival Spear of Cambridge University has said: "It was possible for a man to admire the West and to revere the East and to have European authority for both opinions." What arrogance! The "unique" has to be replaced by "Universals" in the plural. We have to be the children of the horizons, or as the Atharvaveda (16.3.6) says, Samudro Asmi Vidharmana, "The Unbounded Ocean am I."

## Theo-diversity and Humane values

Abrahamic	Indic
	Bio-diversity to Theo-diversity
Desert	River
No Change, Vast Stretches	Flow
	Banks / Maryada
Monocentrism	Polycentrism
Revelation (adeshana)	Realization (sadhana)
Man In the Image of God	Gods In the Image of Man
Theism	Humanism
Commandments via Prophetism	Existence to Transcendence
Absolute	Relative
Denial of Alterity	Jijivisha, sanctity of all life, and
(kufr, paganism)	jijnasa, constant knowing
Dogma	Enlightenment
Religious citadels	Cathedrals of Silence
Closed inner spaces	Seto Bandhumasati Nirvindan
Human Rights	Humane values ⇒ Human duties ⇒ Human rights
Complementarity and Symbolic Hermeneutics	
Frontiers	Horizons
Western Confirmation	Inner Consciousness, Samudro Asmi Vidharmana

80 03

#### Part 5

# The decline of Christianity

The retreat of Christianity has been widely discussed in the West — by Christians as much as by agnostics — but, as always, subtly hidden from view in India. Indeed, the most damaging statement that can be made on Westsponsored Christian proselytism is that it has failed to retain its home ground in the first place.

Among the issues examined in this fifth part are the continuing clash between hard-line Christianity and science, the widespread abuses perpetrated by churches on Natives and children in various parts of the world, the decline of church following and the rise of alternative faiths in the West. Overall, we are witnessing the emergence of a very different perspective of "Christian West."

#### Swami Vivekananda: Christianity vs. Science

What support has Christianity ever lent to the spread of civilisation, either spiritual or secular? What reward did the Christian religion offer to the European Pundit who sought to prove for the first time that the Earth is a revolving planet? What scientist has ever been hailed with approval and enthusiasm by the Christian Church?... The great thinkers of Europe — Voltaire, Darwin, Buchner, Flammarion, Victor Hugo and a host of others like him — are in the present time denounced by Christianity and are victims of vituperative tongues of its orthodox community.... Whatever flights of progress Europe has attained, every one of them has been gained by its revolt against Christianity — by its rising against it. If Christianity had its old paramount sway in Europe today, it would have lighted the fire of the Inquisition against such modern scientists as Pasteur and Koch, and burnt Darwin and others of his school, at the stake. In modern Europe, Christianity and civilisation are two different things. Civilization has now girded up her loins to destroy her old enemy, Christianity, to overthrow the clergy and to wring educational and charitable institutions from their hands. But for the ignorance-ridden rustic masses, Christianity would have never been able for a moment to support its despised existence and would have been pulled out by its roots....

Complete Works (1990), vol. 5, pp. 532-33

OB

#### Christianity and Science

Christianity has a long history of conflict with science. Because most theologians insisted that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore as infallible as God (a doctrine known as "inerrancy"), the worldview they presented was largely contrary to facts of Nature, often ludicrously so. In the fourth century AD, for instance, "saints" such as Cyril of Jerusalem or John Chrysostom condemned the belief in a spherical earth and asserted it was flat. On the other hand, a century later, St. Augustine accepted the Greek model of a spherical earth, but wrote, "It is impossible that there should be inhabitants on the opposite side of the Earth, since no such race is recorded by Scripture among the descendants of Adam." Had there been any, he also reasoned, they would have had to walk upside down, which clearly proved the impossibility of their existence.

Medieval thought was partly founded on the Aristotelian worldview, which placed the spherical earth at the centre of the universe, as several passages of the Bible also seemed to do. Despite improvements by Ptolemy, this geocentric model made it hard to account for planetary motions. In the middle of the sixteenth century, Copernicus put forth his heliocentric model (with all planets revolving around the sun), which Galileo's observations in the early seventeenth century confirmed. But the Church would not have it: "To assert that the earth revolves around the sun is as erroneous as to claim that Jesus was not born of a virgin," asserted Cardinal Bellarmine in 1615, during Galileo's trial. Protestants were no better: earlier, Luther had described Reason as "the Devil's greatest whore . . . to be deluded, blinded, and destroyed," while Calvin had asked, "Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?"

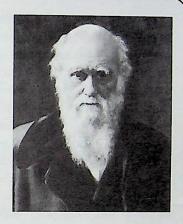
While geocentrism is today limited to a lunatic fringe, "mainstream" Christian fundamentalism is concerned with a

more serious issue: that of *creationism vs. evolution*. It came to the fore in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when advances in geology started suggesting that the earth is much older than the 6,000 years or so that had been calculated by various theologians on the basis of the genealogies listed in the Bible. The time needed for geological folds to form, for mountains to rise and for some formations to display considerable erosion, pointed to a time scale that clashed with the "young earth theory" implied by the Genesis account of a six-day A-to-Z slapdash creation. The discovery of fossils complicated matters, as it again suggested a remote antiquity and slightly different or vanished species which the biblical account could not explain.

The big blow to biblical creationism came in 1859 with the publication of Charles *Darwin's Origin of Species* (which he had postponed writing as much as possible, aware of the controversies his findings were bound to trigger). Others before him had suggested that species could evolve, but he presented the first systematic demonstration as well as a study of the mechanisms involved, especially natural selection. Of course, the suggestion that species evolved from more primitive forms, many of them splitting away from common ancestors, was unacceptable to Christian orthodoxy, for which all species had been created in an instant, exactly as they are today, and were unchanging (the so-called "fixity of species"), while Darwin wrote that "endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

A shy Darwin stayed as far from the storm as possible; others took up his defence, among them the formidable British biologist Thomas H. Huxley, whose lectures on the new theory were greatly appreciated. A section of the English press, however, raged at Huxley's exposition of an "anti-scriptural and most debasing theory ... standing in blasphemous contradiction to biblical narrative and doctrine ... the vilest and beastliest paradox ever vented in ancient or modern times amongst Pagans or Christians." In a public debate, Huxley faced

Samuel Wilberforce, bishop of Oxford, who had declared his intention to "smash Darwin"; when Wilberforce caricatured the idea of descending from an ape (was it on one's grandfather's or grandmother's side?), Huxley replied he would rather have an ape as his grandfather than a man who misused his abilities and talents to ridicule a grave scientific discussion. (When, thirteen years later, Wil-



berforce fell from his horse and died, Huxley remarked that Wilberforce's brains had at last come into contact with reality, and the outcome had been fatal.)

Huxley summed up the whole issue of Christian literalism vs. science in these words: "The longer I live and the more I learn the more hopeless to my mind becomes the contradiction between the theory of the universe as understood and expounded by Jewish and Christian theologians, and the theory of the universe which is every day and every year growing out of the application of scientific methods to its phenomena."

In the next two decades, as Darwin and other scientists continued to produce new insights, creationism retreated. For the vast majority of scientists today, the issue simply does not exist any longer.\*

But Christian fundamentalists, especially in the U.S.A., have worked hard to keep it alive, asserting, in the words of one of them, that one must "either ... believe God's Word all the way, or not at all." Incredibly, fundamentalist groups were able

<sup>\*</sup> An excellent booklet, *Science and Creationism* (Washington: National Academy Press, 1999), summarizes all the scientific evidence against creationism; it can be read and downloaded at www.nap.edu/catalog/6024.html, http://darwin.nap.edu/books/0309064066/html or http://fermat.nap.edu/html/creationism.

to score major victories in the twentieth century. One famous example of their unrepentant obscurantism was the Scopes trial (which became known as the "Scopes Monkey Trial"). In March 1925, following a fundamentalist wave sweeping across the U.S.A., the Tennessee legislature passed the infamous Butler Act, which made it illegal for a teacher at school and university levels "to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals." John Scopes, a young science teacher, admitted to teaching evolution; he was brought to trial and, despite a vigorous defence and worldwide attention, declared guilty and fined (the conviction was later overturned on a technicality).

Textbook publishers were so unnerved that the theory of evolution was virtually erased from textbooks for the next thirty-five years. Only with the 1957 launch of the first Sputnik by the Soviets did the U.S. government wake up; the next year, evolution was reintroduced in high-school biology textbooks. It took another ten years for the Butler Act to be finally repealed. In 1968, in judgment over a similar Arkansas law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public schools, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the states that sought to "alter the science curriculum to reflect endorsement of a religious view that is antagonistic to the theory of evolution" were breaking the First Amendment ban on the establishment of religion, and it repealed all remaining creationist laws.

But fundamentalists — to their credit — never give up. Creationists kept producing book after book, exposing imagined flaws in the theory of evolution, in the fossil record, in the Big Bang theory, and putting forth "scientific" theories of their own, which they called "creation science." Some argued that God had created the earth complete with geological folds and fossils, others that the light astronomers said has been travelling from galaxies billions of light-years away had in reality been created midway by God a few millennia ago — in other words, their mystifying Creator had made a brand-new universe

with all the appearances of an old one. (They did not seem to notice that this made him a grand Deceiver rather than a Creator.) In any case, they insisted, the universe was created by "intelligent design" — even if they made it look singularly unintelligent. Such pseudoscientific literature, buttressed by vigorous public campaigns, made many "converts." The following landmarks are eloquent enough:

- In 1973, Tennessee (again) passed a law requiring textbooks to give equal emphasis to the Genesis account of Creation; two years later, it was ruled unconstitutional because it violated the principle of separation of church and state.
- A 1981 law in the state of Arkansas, requiring "balanced treatment of Creation-Science and evolution in public schools," was thrown out by a district court the next year as unconstitutional.
- A Louisiana law requiring "equal time" to the teaching of "creation science" and evolution in public schools was rejected on the same ground by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1987.
- In 1999, the Kansas State Board of Education voted to omit evolution, all discussion of the earth's age, and the Big Bang theory from standard public school curricula. Following protests, the vote was overturned two years later and the Board members who had supported it were voted out.
- In 2002, the Ohio State Board of Education partially adopted the "Teach the Controversy" initiative of creationists.
- Two years later, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter issued a statement condemning the suggestion that the word "evolution" be banned from textbooks used in schools in the state of Georgia. The State education official also scaled back ideas about the age of the earth and the natural selection of species.

- In 2005, parents complained that their children at a Dover (Pennsylvania) school were sought to be influenced against evolution and in favour of "intelligent design." All eight school board members who promoted the intelligent design failed to get reelected; then, in December, the Harrisburg federal court ruled that "intelligent design" was just another name for "creationism" and was not science, and barred it from being taught in public school science classrooms. The notorious U.S. evangelist Pat Robertson commented on the Christian Broadcasting Network: "If there is a disaster in your area, don't turn to God. You just rejected him from your city [Dover]."
  - In 2006, after conservatives regained the majority, the Kansas State Board of Education again adopted science standards embracing intelligent design and casting doubt on Darwinian evolution. In August, the Board's conservative members lost the majority, but the core issue remains undecided.
  - In August 2006, evolutionary biology was found to be mysteriously missing from the list of undergraduate subjects eligible for a US federal grant; following a flurry of protests, the "mistake" was corrected.

These controversies keep resurfacing in the U.S.A. because, according to a 2005 opinion poll, 64% of Americans favour the teaching of creationism or intelligent design in addition to evolution; besides, 38% are altogether opposed to the teaching of evolution in public schools. Further, a 2006 Gallup poll established that 46% of Americans believe in strict creationism, concurring with the statement that "God created man pretty much in his present form at one time within the last 10,000 years." These figures illustrate the depth of penetration of fundamentalist propaganda in the U.S.A. In fact, in 2005, president George Bush expressed himself in favour of both creationism and evolution being taught in U.S. schools — as

if creationism was a scientific theory on a par with evolution. Next to that country, Australia has been a fertile ground for such seeds. In August 2005, a week after George Bush's pronouncement, Australia's Education Minister gave the nod for intelligent design to be taught in schools alongside the theory of evolution, stating, "The controversial new theory known as intelligent design has enough merit to be included in the school curriculum." (This, again, misrepresents the fact that creationism is no "theory" at all, but plain dogma.) Expectedly, the Minister's statement was received with delight among fundamentalist groups such as the "Campus Crusade for Christ," and some schools announced their intention to introduce "intelligent design." In contrast, over 70,000 scientists and science teachers warned in an open letter that intelligent design should not be taught in school science classes, because not being testable, it is not science, and such "unscientific world views ... [would] crowd out the teaching of real science." The debate goes on.

In 2004, Italy saw an attempt by the Education Minister to compel students to learn about creationism; top Italian scientists responded with an open letter and a petition signed by more than 50,000 citizens, which forced the Minister to backtrack.

The Roman Catholic Church had, in recent years, kept out of the controversy, with John Paul II even issuing a statement that Darwinian evolution was "more than a hypothesis." This may however be about to change, according to reports that "philosophers, scientists and other intellectuals close to Pope Benedict XVI will gather at his summer palace outside Rome this week [starting 28 August 2006] for intensive discussions that could herald a fundamental shift in the Vatican's view of evolution. . . . There have been growing signs that the Pope is considering aligning his church more closely with the theory of 'intelligent design'." Recently, for instance, Father George Coyne, director of the Vatican Observatory, criticized Cardinal Schönborn, known to be close to the Pope, for an article

in the New York Times supporting the teaching of intelligent design; on August 19, Fr. Coyne was removed ostensibly on health grounds.

CB

Clearly, the battle between Christian obscurantism and the scientific perspective will continue, until a sufficient number of people realize that the orthodox Christian worldview is incompatible not only with science and reason, but with common sense and humane values.

Hinduism, on the other hand, has never had a problem with science. Its worldview, founded on an infinity of time and space, found itself in tune with the findings of astronomy or geology, as many thinkers have pointed out (such as Carl Sagan). Also, Darwin's view of evolution found an ancient echo in the series of Vishnu's avatars, which begins with a fish, a tortoise, a boar, and moves on to more and more perfect forms of the human being; no Hindu leader ever condemned the teaching of evolution at school. Lastly, unlike Christianity, Hinduism has a long and healthy tradition of encouraging a variety of opinions, including dissent, so that the twin notion of dogma and heresy is alien to it.

CB

# CANADA'S RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

A few papers in this volume have highlighted Christianity's keen interest in education. The following extracts from official reports highlight the case of Canada's "residential schools" established in the nineteenth century. Those schools were the outcome of the 1857 "Gradual Civilization Act" and the 1876 "Indian Act," by which the government asserted control over all Canadian "Indians" (i.e., Natives or Aborigines): in order to "civilize" them, it assumed the power to force Native children into boarding schools. Those schools were actually run by four Christian church groups — Catholic, Anglican, United and Presbyterian under a contract with the government. By the 1930s, 80 such schools were functioning, spread over most provinces of Canada. Lakhs of students went through them, a high proportion of whom - perhaps as high as half died of the appalling mistreatment they received; most of the survivors were scarred for the rest of their lives. and many committed suicide. The idea behind those schools was simply to uproot the native children, give them rudiments of Western education, and Christianize them; in practice, however, they were prisons where boys and girls were physically and psychologically abused on a massive scale. As always, plain racism mingled with a bloated sense of cultural and religious superiority.

In the 1990s, more than 4,500 lawsuits were launched against the government and the churches, representing at least 9,000 former students. The government began realizing the extent of the scandal, but initially declined to apologize to or compensate the victims. However, the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples, released in 1996 — the year the last residential school closed — acknowledged and documented the abuse in detail for the

first time, and explored the basis for a true reconciliation. Two years later, the government did issue an apology to Canada's 1.5 million Natives as well as a "Statement of Reconciliation." The Minister of Indian Affairs stated. "Attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of aboriginal culture and values. As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations\* that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act. The time has come to state formally that the days of paternalism and disrespect are behind us and we are committed to changing the nature of the relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Canada." However, the Native Indians complained that such honourable intentions were hardly translated into practice, and that few of the reforms suggested in the Royal Commission Report were acted upon: funds initially set apart for compensation were felt to be inadequate and compensation claims were deliberately processed sluggishly, so that claimants would die away. Finally, on November 23, 2005, the Canadian government announced a compensation package of 1.9 billion dollars to benefit tens of thousands of survivors of the native residential schools. National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations said the package covered "decades in time, innumerable events and countless injuries to First Nations individuals and communities."

Canada's mistreatment of its Natives, especially on the

<sup>\*</sup> A "nation," in the American context, is a tribe or clan, often part of a larger confederation; the term also refers to the territory of a particular tribe. (Eds.)

educational front, is sadly not specific to that country: the motives and methods of mistreatment described here are an integral part of the missionary-colonial machine wherever it could reach.

#### CB

# Excerpts from "Residential Schools," chapter 10 in the Report of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples\*

\*This five-volume report can be read at:

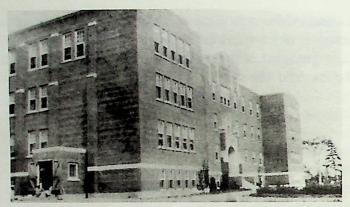
http://ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm\_e.html and chapter 10 at: http://ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgm10\_e.html or:

http://ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/cg10\_e.pdf).

As the report is lengthy (116 pages for ch. 10 alone), we have omitted, besides all references, the larger part of important discussions on the schools' historical background, the psychological damage inflicted on children, and their social condition after their "schooling." The reader should therefore keep in mind that this is only a brief compilation that cannot do full justice to the topic, and is invited to study the full report. Please note that neither this compilation nor the full report are for the squeamish. (These remarks also apply to the second part of this compilation, drawn from the Law Commission Report — see the section "Restoring Dignity.")

For a general presentation from the Native perspective, see: www.afn.ca/residentialschools/index.html or: www.shannonthunderbird.com/residential\_schools.htm.

Many important studies have appeared on the subject, among them: Celia Haig-Brown, Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School (Tillacum Library, Vancouver BC, 1988); Elizabeth Furniss, A conspiracy of silence: The care of the Native students at St. Joseph's residential school, Williams Lake B.C. (Williams Lake, BC. Caribou Council, 1991); Darcy Henton, et al., Boys don't cry: the struggle for justice and healing in Canada's biggest sex abuse scandal (McClelland & Stewart, 1996); J.R. Miller, Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools (University of Toronto Press, 1996); A. Grant, No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publishing, 1996); R. Chrisjohn & S. Young, The Circle Game – Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1997). (Eds.)



Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, Canada, in 1930

In the first few decades of the life of the new Canadian nation, when the government turned to address the constitutional responsibility for Indians and their lands assigned by the Constitution Act, 1867, it adopted a policy of assimilation. ... It was a policy designed to move communities, and eventually all Aboriginal peoples, from their helpless 'savage' state to one of self-reliant 'civilization' and thus to make in Canada but one community — a non-Aboriginal, Christian one.

Of all the steps taken to achieve that goal, none was more obviously a creature of Canada's paternalism toward Aboriginal people, its civilizing strategy and its stern assimilative determination than education. ... It would, the minister of Indian affairs, Frank Oliver, predicted in 1908, "elevate the Indian from his condition of savagery" and "make him a self-supporting member of the state, and eventually a citizen in good standing." ... Politician, civil servant and, perhaps most critically, priest and parson [= pastor] all felt that in developing the residential school system they were responding not only to a constitutional but to a Christian "obligation to our Indian brethren" that could be discharged only "through the medium of the children" and "therefore education must be given the foremost place." ...

Selfless Christian duty and self-interested statecraft were

the foundations of the residential school system. The edifice itself was erected by a church/government partnership that would manage the system jointly until 1969. In this task the churches — Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian — led the way. Indeed, their energetic proselytizing resulted in the opening of residential schools in Ontario, the northwest and British Columbia even before ... 1879. Thereafter, the system — a combination of boarding schools built close to or in reserve communities and ... centrally located industrial schools — was expanded rapidly, reaching a high point with 80 schools in 1931\* and growing again in the 1950s as part of the nation's post-war expansion into Inuit\*\* homelands. It was maintained until the mid-1980s. Schools were built in every province and territory except Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. They registered children from every Aboriginal culture - Indian, Inuit, and Métis\*\*\* children too — though the federal government assumed no constitutional responsibility for Métis people. While Métis children would be invisible, rarely mentioned in the records, they were nevertheless there and were treated the same as all the children were.

Put simply, the residential school system was an attempt by successive governments to determine the fate of Aboriginal people in Canada by appropriating and reshaping their future in the form of thousands of children who were removed from their homes and communities and placed in the care of

<sup>\*</sup> The report lists here in a table the locations and religious denominations of the schools, along with this caption: "In 1931 there were 44 Roman Catholic (RC), 21 Church of England (CE), 13 United Church (UC) and 2 Presbyterian (PR) schools. These proportions among the denominations were constant throughout the history of the system. In Quebec two schools ... were opened before the Second World War. Four more were added after the war..." (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Inuits form an ethnic group spread over northern Canada from Greenland to Alaska. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*\* &</sup>quot;Métis" refers to a person of mixed parentage, especially the offspring of a French Canadian and an American Indian. (Eds.)

strangers. ... Marching out from the schools, the children, effectively re-socialized, imbued with the values of European culture, would be the vanguard of a magnificent metamorphosis: the 'savage' was to be made 'civilized', made fit to take up the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.

Tragically, the future that was created is now a lamentable heritage for those children and the generations that came after, for Aboriginal communities and, indeed, for all Canadians. The school system's concerted campaign "to obliterate" those "habits and associations," Aboriginal languages, traditions and beliefs, and its vision of radical re-socialization, were compounded by mismanagement and underfunding, the provision of inferior educational services and the woeful mistreatment, neglect and abuse of many children — facts that were known to the department and the churches throughout the history of the school system.

In the course of that history there were those who understood that such a terrible legacy was being created. In 1943, R. Hoey, the department's superintendent of welfare and training, on receiving from the principal of St. George's School (located on the Fraser River, just north of Lyttons, B.C.) a set of shackles that had been used routinely "to chain runaways to the bed" and reports of other abuses at the school, wrote, "I can understand now why there appears to be such a widespread prejudice on the part of the Indians against residential schools. Such memories do not fade out of the human consciousness very rapidly." Nevertheless, with very few exceptions, neither senior departmental officials nor churchmen nor members of Parliament raised their voices against the assumptions that underlay the system or its abusive character. And, of course, the memory did not and has not faded. It has persisted, festered and become a sorrowful monument, still casting a deep shadow over the lives of many Aboriginal people and communities and over the possibility of a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

## The vision of residential school education

... If the children's potential was to be realized, it could only be outside the family. As E. Dewdney, superintendent general of Indian affairs in Macdonald's second government, reasoned, children therefore had to be removed from "deleterious home influences"; they must be, the Archbishop of St. Boniface added, "caught young to be saved from what is on the whole the degenerating influence of their home environment." Their parents were, by the light of the vision's compelling logic, unfit. Only Frank Oliver demurred, pointing out the essentially un-Christian implication of this formative conclusion:

I hope you will excuse me for so speaking but one of the most important commandments laid upon the human by the divine is love and respect by children for parents. It seems strange that in the name of religion a system of education should have been instituted, the foundation principle of which not only ignored but contradicted this command.

No one took any notice of the minister, however, for no one involved in Indian affairs doubted for a moment that separation was justified and necessary and that residential schools were therefore indispensable. . . . The common wisdom of the day that animated the educational plans of church and state was that Aboriginal children had to be rescued from their "evil surroundings," isolated from parents, family and community, and "kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions."\* There, through a purposeful course of instruction that Vankoughnet described as "persistent" tuition, a

<sup>\*</sup>The "vision" of a civilizing education spelt out in this and the following paragraphs was (and subtly remains) exactly that of missionary and convent schools in India. See "Education in India: Destruction and Change under missionary and colonial influence" in Part 3. (Eds.)

great transformation would be wrought in the children. By a curriculum aimed at radical cultural change — the second critical element of the vision — the 'savage' child would surely be re-made into the 'civilized' adult. . . .

Cardinal among these virtues was moral training for, as a memorandum from the Catholic principals explained, "all true civilization must be based on moral law." Christianity had to supplant the children's Aboriginal spirituality, which was nothing more than "pagan superstition" that "could not suffice" to make them "practise the virtues of our civilization and avoid its attendant vices." In the schools, as well as in the communities, there could be no compromise, no countenancing Aboriginal beliefs and rituals, which, "being the result of a free and easy mode of life, cannot conform to the intense struggle for life which our social conditions require."

The children were not only to imbibe those values, and a new faith, they were to live them. The school was to be a home — a Canadian one. On crossing its threshold, the children were entering a non-Aboriginal world where, with their hair shorn and dressed in European clothes, they would leave behind the 'savage' seasonal round of hunting and gathering for a life ordered by the hourly precision of clocks and bells and an annual calendar of rituals, the festivals of church and state — Christmas, Victoria Day, Dominion Day and St. Jean Baptiste Day — that were the rapid, steady pulse of the industrial world. According to Dewdney, students had to be taught that "there should be an object for the employment of every moment," and thus the "routine ... the recurrence of the hours for meals, classwork, outside duties ... are all of great importance in the training and education, with a view to future usefulness."

In school, in chapel, at work and even at play the children were to learn the Canadian way. Recreation was re-creation. Games and activities would not be the "boisterous and unorganized games" of "savage" youth. Rather they were to have brass bands, football, cricket, baseball and above all hockey

"with the well regulated and ... strict rules that govern our modern games," prompting "obedience to discipline" and thus contributing to the process of moving the children along the path to civilization.

None of the foregoing would be achieved, however, unless the children were first released from the shackles that tied them to their parents, communities and cultures. The civilizers in the churches and the department understood this and, moreover, that it would not be accomplished simply by bringing the children into the school. Rather it required a concerted attack on the ontology, on the basic cultural patterning of the children and on their world view. They had to be taught to see and understand the world as a European place within which only European values and beliefs had meaning; thus the wisdom of their cultures would seem to them only savage superstition. A wedge had to be driven not only physically between parent and child but also culturally and spiritually. Such children would then be separated forever from their communities, for even if they went home they would, in the words of George Manuel, bring "the generation gap with them." Only in such a profound fashion could the separation from savagery and the re-orientation as civilized be assured.

That the department and churches understood the central challenge they faced in civilizing the children as that of overturning Aboriginal ontology is seen in their identification of language as the most critical issue in the curriculum. It was through language that children received their cultural heritage from parents and community. It was the vital connection that civilizers knew had to be cut if progress was to be made. E. F. Wilson informed the department that at Shingwauk school, "We make a great point of insisting on the boys talking English, as, for their advancement in civilization, this is, of all things, the most necessary." Aboriginal languages could not carry the burden of civilization; they could not "impart ideas which, being entirely outside the experience and

environment of the pupils and their parents, have no equivalent expression in their native language." Those ideas were the core concepts of European culture — its ontology, theology and values. Without the English language, the department announced in its annual report of 1895, the Aboriginal person is "permanently disabled" and beyond the pale of assimilation for, "So long as he keeps his native tongue, so long will he remain a community apart."

The only effective road to English or French, however, and thus a necessary precondition for moving forward with the multifaceted civilizing strategy, was to stamp out Aboriginal languages in the schools and in the children. The importance of this to the department and the churches cannot be overstated. In fact, the entire residential school project was balanced on the proposition that the gate to assimilation was unlocked only by the progressive destruction of Aboriginal languages. With that growing silence would come the dying whisper of Aboriginal cultures. To that end, the department ordered that "the use of English in preference to the Indian dialect must be insisted upon."

It was left to school principals to implement that directive, to teach the languages of 'civilization' — French in Quebec and English in all other parts of Canada, including Francophone areas, and to prevent the language of 'savagery' from being spoken in the school. Some instituted imaginative systems of positive reinforcement through rewards, prizes or privileges for the exclusive use of English. More often than not, however, the common method was punishment. Children throughout the history of the system were beaten for speaking their language. . . .

# Neglect

Overcrowding, the most critical dynamic in the spread of tuberculosis, was systemic, a predictable outcome of underfunding and of the per capita grant arrangement that put a

premium on each student taken from a community. Senior church officials lobbied the government constantly not only for higher rates but for implementation of a compulsory education regime that would ensure that the schools earned the maximum grant possible. For their part, the principals, unable to make ends meet, as rates were rarely increased to the level of real costs, pushed to have their authorized enrolments raised. The pressure to keep schools full meant there was a tendency to take as many children as possible, often going past wise limits, with disastrous consequences. This led to bizarre recruitment techniques, including, local officials reported, "bribing and kidnapping." As well, officials were not very careful about the health of the children they brought into the schools. The Anglican Bishop of Caledonia in British Columbia admitted candidly, "The per capita grant system encourages the taking in of those physically and intellectually unfit simply to keep up numbers."

The impact of Bryce's report, submitted in 1907, which in part only repeated what was already in departmental files, stemmed from his statistical profile of the extent of tuberculosis among children in western schools. It became the stuff of headlines and critical editorial comment. Saturday Night concluded that "even war seldom shows as large a percentage of fatalities as does the education system we have imposed upon our Indian wards." The percentage was indeed shocking. Bryce's death toll for the 1,537 children in his survey of 15 schools was 24 per cent, and this figure might have risen to 42 per cent if the children had been tracked for three years after they returned to their reserves. The rate varied from school to school going as high as 47 per cent at Old Sun's on the Blackfoot reserve. Kuper Island school in British Columbia, which was not included in Bryce's sample, had a rate of 40 per cent over its 25-year history. While a few officials and churchmen rejected Bryce's findings and attacked him as a "medical faddist," most had to agree with him, and no less an authority than Scott asserted that, system-wide, "fifty per

cent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein." ... The avalanche of reports on the condition of children — hungry, malnourished, ill-clothed, dying of tuberculosis, overworked — failed to move either the churches or successive governments past the point of intention and on to concerted and effective remedial action.

# Discipline and abuse

At the heart of the vision of residential education — a vision of the school as home and sanctuary of motherly care — there was a dark contradiction, an inherent element of savagery in the mechanics of civilizing the children. The very language in which the vision was couched revealed what would have to be the essentially violent nature of the school system in its assault on child and culture. The basic premise of resocialization, of the great transformation from 'savage' to 'civilized', was violent. "To kill the Indian in the child," the department aimed at severing the artery of culture that ran between generations and was the profound connection between parent and child sustaining family and community. In the end, at the point of final assimilation, "all the Indian there is in the race should be dead." This was more than a rhetorical flourish as it took on a traumatic reality in the life of each child separated from parents and community and isolated in a world hostile to identity, traditional belief and language. . . .

Discipline and punishment in the service of cultural change formed the context of the children's lives. At school, they lived by a meticulous regimen of early rising, working, worshipping, learning and, finally, resting. Punishment for "insubordination," for transgressing that regime and thus challenging the authority of the schoolmasters was pervasive and to some observers poisonous. In 1936, G. Barry, district inspector of schools in British Columbia, described Alberni school on Vancouver Island, "where every member of staff carried a

strap"\* and where "children have never learned to work without punishment." ... Although there were caring and conscientious staff, not every principal, teacher or employee was of the desired moral character; outside the gaze of public scrutiny, isolated from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, schools were the opportunistic sites of abuse.

And abuse there was — identified as such by those inside the system, both in the churches and in the department. Head office, regional, school and church files are replete, from early in the system's history, with incidents that violated the norms of the day. In 1896, Agent D.L. Clink refused to return a child to the Red Deer school because he feared "he would be abused." Without ever being reprimanded by the principal, a teacher had beaten children severely on several occasions, one of whom had to be hospitalized. "Such brutality," Clink concluded, "should not be tolerated for a moment" and "would not be tolerated in a white school for a single day in any part of Canada," A senior official in western Canada, David Laird, submitted a report on Norway House in 1907 detailing "frequent whippings" over an eight-year period of a young boy, Charlie Clines, for bedwetting. The "severity of his punishment" was not, Laird asserted, "in accordance with Christian methods."

The result of Charlie Clines' punishment was what became an all too familiar episode. In "constant dread of the lash," Charlie finally fled. He slept out "in weather so severe that his toes were frozen and he ... will lose them." Hundreds of children ran away because, the assistant deputy of the department explained in 1917, of "frequent punishment" and "too much hard work" and "travelled through all sorts of hardships to reach their distant homes." Many, however, did not make it to their communities. ... This certainly was the case, for example, in two quite representative tragedies in British Columbia. In 1902, Johnny Sticks found his son, Duncan, dead

<sup>\*</sup> A strap is a heavy strip of leather used as a whip. (Eds.)

of exposure, having fled from the Williams Lake industrial school. Nearly four decades later, in 1937 at the Lejac school, four boys ran away and were found frozen to death on the lake within sight of their community. They were wearing only summer-weight clothes. In both cases, investigations uncovered a history of neglect and violence in evidence given by staff, children and some graduates.

At the Williams Lake inquest, Christine Haines explained why she had run off twice in the past: "... the Sisters didn't treat me good — they gave me rotten food to eat and punished me for not eating it." She was locked in a room, fed bread and water and beaten "with a strap, sometimes on the face, and sometimes [they] took my clothes off and beat me — this is the reason I ran away." Other children, including Duncan's sister, made the same charges. The sister responsible for the girls denied such brutal treatment but admitted that girls had been locked up, one for as long as 12 days.

At Lejac, one graduate, Mrs. S. Patrick, recalled, "Even when we just smiled at one of the boys they gave us that much" - 30 strokes with the strap on each hand — and when they spoke their own language, the sister "made us take down our drawers [undergarments] and she strapped us on the backside with a big strap." ... In a letter to the principal of Crowfoot school, where a visiting nurse had discovered nine children "chained to the benches" in the dining room, one of them "marked badly by a strap," Scott stated that the department would not countenance "treatment that might be considered pitiless or jail-like in character." ... [But] comprehensive regulations on the acceptable means and limits to punishments were never issued, despite requests by more junior departmental employees, and thus principals and staff behaved largely as they saw fit. Children were frequently beaten severely with whips, rods and fists, chained and shackled, bound hand and foot and locked in closets, basements, and bathrooms, and had their heads shaved or hair closely cropped.

There was more to this irresponsibility than simply a failure

of regulation and oversight. There was a pronounced and persistent reluctance on the part of the department to deal forcefully with incidents of abuse, to dismiss, as was its right, or to lay charges against school staff who abused the children. Part of that pattern was an abrogation of responsibility, the abandonment of the children who were "wards of the department" to the churches, which in their turn failed to defend them from the actions of members of their own organizations. ...

In 1919, Graham forwarded reports to the department from a local agent and a police constable describing the case of a runaway from the Anglican Old Sun's school. On being brought back, the boy had been shackled to a bed, had his hands tied, and was "most brutally and unmercifully beaten with a horse quirt until his back was bleeding." The accused, P.H. Gentlemen, admitted using a whip and shackles and that the boy "might have been marked." Again, the department turned to the church for its 'advice'. Canon S. Gould, the general secretary of the Missionary Society, mounted a curious defence - such a beating was the norm "more or less, in every boarding school in the country." ... In 1924, Graham brought forward another incident — the beating of a boy until he was "black from his neck to his buttocks" at the Anglican MacKay school in Manitoba. When he learned that the department had turned over investigation of the case to the church, Graham's reaction showed just how ingrained and corrosive this practice had become. "Chances are," he wrote, "it will end like all the other cases" and thus would undermine further the vigilance of local departmental staff, as they believed that "where the churches are concerned there is no use sending an adverse report, as the department will listen to excuses from incompetent Principals of the schools more readily than to a report from our Inspectors based on the facts as they find them." Unfortunately, Graham was proved right. The agent, J. Waddy, confirmed in a letter to Scott that the punishment of this boy, and indeed of others by the

principal, Reverend E. Bird, had been excessive. Bird admitted that he had marked the boy, but the church exonerated him, and the department let the matter drop. ... In these and in dozens of other cases, no further action was ever taken, and thus abusive situations at many schools remained unresolved.... That the department seemed inherently incapable of following Graham's advice was part of the long established habit of neglect. But it stemmed, as well, from the fact that the department did not think it advisable to contradict the churches in these matters. The church was a force to be reckoned with in the national political arena and therefore in the school system. Calling for a tightening of regulatory guidelines in his 1897 report, Benson complained that the churches had "too much power." In that light, he noted, in 1903, the department had "a certain amount of hesitancy in insisting on the church authorities taking the necessary action."

Some officials certainly feared church influence and thought the department should as well. Agent A. Daunt, who conducted an inquiry into a 1920 incident at Williams Lake involving the suicide of one boy and the attempted mass suicide of eight others, admitted that he felt it unwise to accept the evidence of children, for "to take action on that will bring a religious hornet's nest around the ears of the Department, unless the reverence in which the missionaries are held in the East has undergone a great change since I lived there." ... Chronic reluctance to challenge the churches and to insist upon the proper treatment of the children, together with the churches' persistent carelessness in the face of neglect and abuse by their members, became central elements in the pattern of mishandling abuse as long as the system continued to operate.

The department was not simply overawed by influential churches that refused to accept criticism of their treatment of children or disciplining of their staff. The department was complicit. In the face of criticism, and when abuse or neglect was revealed, too often it seemed to feel not sympathy for

the children but its own vulnerability. For the department, the school system was an important symbol. . . . The importance of the civilizing mission far outweighed issues of justice for the children. . . . The department may have been unnecessarily anxious about public opinion. Through inquests, eye witness reports and newspaper articles, some information about abuse and neglect escaped the system. None of it, however — not even the shocking revelations of the Bryce report — elicited any sustained outcry or demand for reform. The issue of Aboriginal people had been consigned to the darker reaches of national consciousness. Thus the children remained trapped and defenceless within that "circle of civilized conditions," which was impervious both to criticism from without and to the constant evidence of abuse from officials within the department. . . .

Writing in 1991 of her experience in both Anglican and Catholic schools, Mary Carpenter told an all too familiar story:

After a lifetime of beatings, going hungry, standing in a corridor on one leg, and walking in the snow with no shoes for speaking Inuvialuktun [an Inuit language], and having a heavy, stinging paste rubbed on my face, which they did to stop us from expressing our Eskimo custom of raising our eyebrows for 'yes' and wrinkling our noses for 'no', I soon lost the ability to speak my mother tongue. When a language dies, the world it was generated from is broken down too.

Many of those stories, or certainly ones like them, were already known to church and government officials. In 1965, in preparation for the first Residential School Principals' Conference, the department asked six 'successful' former students to give their views on the schools. Two of them were brutally frank, describing the school experience as "an insult to human dignity." One listed the punishments meted out at the "mushole," the Mohawk Institute at Brantford, Ontario.

Besides the usual beatings, "I have seen Indian children having their faces rubbed in human excrement ...; the normal punishment for bedwetters ... was to have his face rubbed in his own urine," and for those who tried to escape, "nearly all were caught and brought back to face the music." They were forced to run a gauntlet where they were "struck with anything that was at hand.... I have seen boys crying in the most abject misery and pain with not a soul to care — the dignity of man!"

Some did get away from the schools, however, and some of those children met their deaths. Other children tried to find escape in death itself. In June 1981, at Muscowequan Residential School, "five or six girls between the ages of 8 and 10 years had tied socks and towels together and tried to hang themselves." Earlier that year, a 15-year-old at the school had been successful in her attempt. . . .

From early in the history of the residential school system, it was apparent that the great majority of children leaving the schools — unlike the few 'successes' the department was able to consult in 1965 — rarely fit the vision's model of the enfranchiseable individual. In some manner, the educational process — an integral part of which was the system's overweening discipline, the "regimentation" noted at Alberni and Mt. Elgin — was counter-productive, undercutting the very qualities that were the prerequisites for assimilation — "individual acting and thinking," the development of "individuality and self control," so that "children are prepared to accept responsibility" and "take their place in our democratic way of life."

At the same time this phenomenon had darker hues. Local agents gave notice that not only did children not undergo a great transformation, but they became stranded between cultures, deviants from the norms of both. In 1913, one agent reviewing the record of children who had come home from McWhinney's Crowstand school, commented that there were "far too many girl graduates ... turning out prostitutes, and boys becoming drunken loafers." Another agent, writing in

1918, opposed the schools because a much greater number of former students than children who had remained in the community were "useless," unable to get on with life on the reserve, and fell foul of the law. It would be, he concluded, "far better that they never go to school than turn out as the ex-pupils . . . have done." . . .

Whether ... those youth ended up in trouble because they did not have enough education, or whether it was the wrong sort of education and a severely debilitating experience, was not normally a matter for inquiry. However, in the late 1960s, the department and the churches were forced to face the fact that there were severe defects in the system. The former students consulted in 1965 were unanimous in the opinion that for most children, the school experience was "really detrimental to the development of the human being." Isolated from both the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal community, schools were "inclined to make robots of their students," who were quite incapable of facing "a world almost unknown to [them]." ...

Soon, however, the department and the churches had to begin to face that issue of "injury" — the product of the long unbroken history of abuse, mistreatment and neglect of children and of the sustained attack on Aboriginal culture.

# **Epilogue**

In December 1992, Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations task force group forwarded to the minister of justice of the day, Kim Campbell, "a statement prepared and approved by B.C. First Nations Chiefs and leaders." In it, they pointed out that

The federal government established the system of Indian residential schools which was operated by various church denominations. Therefore, both the federal government and churches must be held accountable for the pain inflicted upon our people.

We are hurt, devastated and outraged. The effect of the Indian residential school system is like a disease ripping through our communities.

The chiefs' conclusion was not a rhetorical flourish; it was literally true. By the mid-1980s, it was widely and publicly recognized that the residential school experience, in the north and in the south, like smallpox and tuberculosis in earlier decades, had devastated and continued to devastate communities. The schools were, with the agents and instruments of economic and political marginalization, part of the contagion of colonization. In their direct attack on language, beliefs and spirituality, the schools had been a particularly virulent strain of that epidemic of empire, sapping the children's bodies and beings. In later life, many adult survivors, and the families and communities to which they returned, all manifested a tragic range of symptoms emblematic of "the silent tortures that continue in our communities." In 1990 Chief Ed Metatawabin of the Fort Albany First Nation community told the minister, Tom Siddon, that

... The 'Graduates' of the 'Ste Anne's Residential School' era are now trying and often failing to come to grips with life as adults after being raised as children in an atmosphere of fear, loneliness and loathing. Fear of caretakers. Loneliness, knowing that elders and family were far away. Loathing from learning to hate oneself, because of the repeated physical, verbal or sexual abuse suffered at the hands of various adult caretakers. This is only a small part of the story.

What finally broke the seal on the residential school system that had been affixed by Duncan Campbell Scott, making public the story of neglect and physical and cultural abuse, was, ironically, the deepest secret of all — the pervasive sexual abuse of the children. The official files efface the issue almost completely. . . . None of the major reports — Paget, Bryce, or

Caldwell — that dealt critically with almost every aspect of the system mentioned the issue at all; that fell to Aboriginal people themselves. Responding to abusive conditions in their own lives and in their communities, "hundreds of individuals have stepped forward with accounts of abuse in at least 16 schools." Women and men — like Phil Fontaine, the leader of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, who attended the Fort Alexander school — "went out on the limb to talk ... because they wanted to make things better." They did more than just talk, more than just speak their pain and anguish; they and their communities acted. Steps were taken to form support groups and healing circles. Beginning in 1989-1990, abusers, including former residential school staff, were accused, taken to court in British Columbia and the Yukon, and convicted in each case of multiple counts of gross indecency and sexual assault. This set off a chain of police investigations and further prosecutions.

These testimonies opened the floodgates of memories, and they poured out before the public. The trials, though far from being the first acts of resistance, may have had their greatest impact in validating the general critique of the system. In the long history of the schools, protests from parents and communities about conditions in the schools and the care of the children had not been uncommon. Many parents had struggled to protect their children, to prevent them being taken to schools, or petitioned for their return. More often than not, however, they had been brushed aside by the churches and the government. Even the initiatives that achieved their immediate goal — securing better food or calling for an inspection of the school, for example — never amounted to a serious challenge to the way the system operated, and thus they fell on stony ground.

Times changed, however. In the 1980s, that public ground was well watered by growing concern for the safety of women and children in Canada and harrowed by reports of the sexual abuse of non-Aboriginal children at orphanages like Mount Cashel in Newfoundland and at the Alfred reform school in

Ontario. Reflecting such concerns, the government set up a family violence and child abuse initiative, allocating funds for community-based projects dealing with sexual abuse and family violence. Non-Aboriginal Canadians found that Aboriginal revelations and their attack on the schools, and on the disastrous consequences of federal policy in general, fell within the parameters of their own social concerns, and thus non-Aboriginal voices joined the chorus of condemnation. . . .

Abuse had spilled back into communities, so that even after the schools were closed their effects echoed in the lives of subsequent generations of children. A 1989 study sponsored by the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories found that eight out of 10 girls under the age of eight had been victims of sexual abuse, and 50 per cent of boys the same age had been sexually molested as well. The cause was no mystery to social scientists. Researchers with the child advocacy project of the Winnipeg Children's Hospital, who investigated child abuse on the Sandy Bay reserve and other reserves in Manitoba, concluded in their report, A New Justice for Indian Children, that although the "roots of the problem are complex," it is "apparent that the destruction of traditional Indian culture has contributed greatly to the incidence of child sexual abuse and other deviant behaviour." Consultants working for the Assembly of First Nations amplified this behaviour, detailing the "social pathologies" that had been produced by the school system. ...

A central catalyst in that cycle of abuse were those powerful adults, men and women, employees of the churches and the department. In the years after 1969, when the church/state partnership in education was dissolved, the churches had boxed the political compass, so that at the highest levels and in the most public forums, they supported Aboriginal aspirations. In 1975, the Catholic, Anglican and United Churches formed Project North (the Aboriginal Rights Coalition) to coordinate their efforts in Aboriginal campaigns for justice; they were later joined by the Presbyterian church and other

denominations. All of them, however, continued at the community level their historical missionary efforts within a newfound tolerance for Aboriginal spirituality.\*

By 1992, most of the churches had apologized, regretting, in the words of one of the Catholic texts, "the pain, suffering and alienation that so many have experienced." However, as they told the minister in a joint communication through the Aboriginal Rights Coalition in August 1992, they wanted it recognized that they "share responsibility with government for the consequences of residential schools," which included not only "individual cases of physical and sexual abuse" but also "the broader issue of cultural impacts":

... the loss of language through forced English speaking, the loss of traditional ways of being on the land, the loss of parenting skills through the absence of four or five generations of children from Native communities, and the learned behaviour of despising Native identity.

... From all quarters, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, the government was encouraged to institute a public inquiry. A private citizen warned the minister that refusing to do so would be "an indication of your gross insensitivity to the staggering effect on its victims of the crime of sexual abuse." He went on to argue passionately that, more so than in the case of other crimes, sexual abuse of children thrives on the unwillingness of society to deal with it out in the open. So long as we as a society permit 'past events' to remain buried, no matter how painful, we cannot hope to halt the shocking epidemic that we are facing. ...\*\*

<sup>\*</sup> This is a standard proselytizing strategy: first brutalize a people, then preach to it "liberation theology." It has been observed from Central America to India's tribal regions. (Eds.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Here, the report narrates the government's stonewalling: no further inquiry, no official apology, no compensation. Those would come only after the report's publication, with mounting public pressure. (Eds.)

Rather than attempting to close the door on the past, looking only to the future of communities, the terrible facts of the residential school system must be made a part of a new sense of what Canada has been and will continue to be for as long as that record is not officially recognized and repudiated. Only by such an act of recognition and repudiation can a start be made on a very different future. Canada and Canadians must realize that they need to consider changing their society so that they can discover ways of living in harmony with the original people of the land.

The future must include making a place for those who have been affected by the schools to stand in dignity, to remember, to voice their sorrow and anger, and to be listened to with respect. With them Canada needs to pursue justice and mutual healing; it must build a relationship, as the Manitoba leader and much decorated veteran Thomas Prince encouraged the government to do in his appearance before the joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons in 1947, that will bind Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people "so that they can trust each other and…can walk side by side and face this world having faith and confidence in one another."

## क्ष ज

## A few voices\*

(A former student remembers his pre-school life:) If I did something wrong, my grandfather would tell me a long story, and I would figure out for myself its meaning and what it told me about what I had done. ... [My grandmother] was always teaching. She'd cook wonderful things and tell me why it was

<sup>\*</sup>This section is excerpted from Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions, a 455-page report of the Law Commission of Canada, available at:

www.lcc.gc.ca/research\_project/ica/report/ICA\_restoring\_en.pdf or www.lcc.gc.ca/research\_project/child\_abuse-en.asp. (Eds.)



Group photograph of Native children at an "Indian school," Regina, Saskatchewan, c. 1921

so important to have respect for everything on earth that feeds us.

CB

(A member of the Dene Nation:) We were given a number and were called by that number. Our heads were shaved bald and we were all dressed the same. Our daily schedule included rounds of prayer and French Canadian songs. Our mail was read and censored. We were strapped for speaking our own languages and humiliated for any natural act. To a person who actually went through the residential school experience itself, any study on the subject hardly serves to convey the reality to the reader. It was a process we were put through, like animals to the slaughter, only the process was slower, a daily agony. I am one of the survivors of that colonialist experience, still recovering in a different age. I can

still remember the day in September of 1959, being taken from our fish camp along with my little sister, to be led off, hundreds of miles away to school. My grandma standing on the shore, getting smaller.

#### CB

(A former student:) I learned that there is a prison that occupies no physical space. This prison is a form of solitary confinement that when expertly inflicted upon you, can hold you in check for decades. For lack of a better name for this prison I will call it FEAR.

#### CB

(Testimony given at a trial about a schoolgirl abused by a teacher:) ... When she was fourteen, he invited her and her girlfriend to his residence. He took her to his bedroom and showed her pictures in men's magazines. He pulled down her clothing. ... He then penetrated her and had intercourse without her consent. She had been a virgin. She did not assist and did not resist. She was scared and confused. He had been a mentor to her and had seemed almost god-like and because of that she had thought that it must be okay.

#### CB

(At a trial hearing:) The applicant testified that on his first night at the Training Schools, he was in the bathroom and admitted that he and another student were fooling around squirting tooth paste. A [Christian] Brother came from behind and punched him on the side of the head, striking his head on the wall. He was made to stand in front of the clock with his hands behind his back. He was very scared and [had] tears in his eyes. The Brother struck him with a closed fist on his shoulder, he fell on one knee and he was punched. Later on the Brother came and took him

to another Brother's where he was sexually assaulted and buggered by both Brothers. Thereafter this would occur on a regular basis two or three times a week, sometimes he was subjected to sexual assault by a single Brother, but most of the time it was with the two Brothers. At times, instruments would be inserted in his rectum.

#### 03

(Recollection of a student who tried to run away:) He [a Christian Brother] stripped my clothes off, made me lie across his bunk. He took a leather strap — maybe a foot long or a little more — one side was flat, the other side had lumps on it.... To me, being young, I thought he was really big. I looked around once and saw him reach the ceiling with the strap. God I thought he was big. I cried, yelled, screamed — the pain. I think he used both sides of the belt. On the one dresser there was a salt shaker, he would stand there, you could feel him staring — I begged him not to use the salt — I knew I was bleeding because I reached around and felt the blood, but he just kept pouring the salt on me. The pain — God the pain.

#### 80 CB

# Restoring Dignity\*

Without the tangible aspects of their culture — their languages, customary clothing, cultural traditions, religion, traditional meals — many Aboriginal children lost touch with their traditional world view. Students were often made to feel

<sup>\*</sup>This is from the same Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions of the Law Commission of Canada as the earlier section. This report contains an important discussion on apology and reparation; only a brief excerpt is quoted here. (Eds.)

ashamed of their cultural heritage. Many former students recall that, upon leaving residential school, they had little knowledge of what it meant to be Aboriginal. Over time, this loss of culture and connection came to devastate many Aboriginal communities. Without the support of an internalised culture, the capacity for social cooperation, governance and mutual aid is severely diminished. This diminished capacity is reflected in a number of social problems experienced by Aboriginal communities today — substance abuse, violence and crime, domestic abuse, family breakdown. . . .

Acknowledging a wrong may imply apology for that wrong, but it is only one element of a meaningful apology. While not all survivors want an apology, especially if it is offered in lieu of other forms of redress, many identify receiving an apology as one of their highest priorities. What survivors seek from an apology is not a mechanical "I'm sorry that I hurt you" or "We're sorry that you suffered." The elements necessary for a meaningful apology have been described as follows:

- Acknowledgement of the wrong done;
- · Accepting responsibility for the wrong that was done;
- The expression of sincere regret or remorse;
- · Assurance that the wrong will not recur, and
- Reparation through concrete measures.

... Apologies do not rewrite history — quite the contrary. They aim to facilitate reconciliation and healing by honestly facing up to the harms of the past. And while the harms may, in some cases, be historically distant, their effects are a fact of life that survivors and those around them continue to live with daily. The sad truth is that, as a society, we are living with the fallout from the abuse of children in institutions: through the intergenerational effects of poor parenting or domestic violence; the low educational levels and diminished life skills of many survivors; and the disproportionate numbers of survivors who spend time in correctional facilities. An apology is a step in the healing process, and should be

understood as a move towards a better future, rather than as a fruitless hearkening back to an unhappy but unchangeable past. . . .

Finally, it is not up to the person delivering the apology to decide what should be the appropriate reaction of the person to whom the apology is offered. Survivors express the need for an apology; they alone are able to determine if it is meaningful and if it will be accepted. A true apology comprises a complex set of elements that, together, can succeed in shifting the power between the parties, restoring the dignity of the survivor, and opening the way to reconciliation.

क्ष व्य

# AUSTRALIA'S STOLEN GENERATION

Canada's treatment of its Indians finds a parallel in Australia's of its Aborigines. White settlers from Britain, first arrived in 1788, forcibly occupied this vast territory; its Natives did not count and were seen as no more than a nuisance. The Aboriginal population of about 750,000 at the time declined to 31,000 by 1911: in other words, over 95% of the indigenous population was wiped out in a little over a century, largely as a result of diseases brought by the settlers, but also with at least 20,000 victims of a long series of cold-blooded massacres. Their exact number will never be known, as courts rejected Aboriginal evidence: "Non-Christians could not swear oaths, and white killers used the defence that Aboriginal morality did not exist," writes Prof. Ben Kiernan. "No European was ever charged for assaulting or killing an Aboriginal."\* As elsewhere, the logical outcome of the missionary-colonial phenomenon was simple genocide.

In 1836, the Governor of South Australia issued a proclamation promising to "protect" Aborigines, but at the same time to promote "their conversion to the Christian faith." The 1869 Aboriginal Protection Act (a rather cynical designation) gave authorities the power to decide "where any Aboriginal or any tribe of Aborigines shall reside."

To eradicate the Native identity more efficiently, the Australian government moved from "protection" to "welfare": it arrogated to itself the right to forcibly remove Aboriginal children from their parents so as to rescue them from their "aimless and immoral" life and speed up their "assimilation." At first, the concentration was on "half-castes," that is, children with some "Caucasian" blood (most often as a result of rape). Between 1880 and

<sup>\*</sup>Prof. Ben Kiernan, "Will Australia Atone?" Bangkok Post, 10 Sept. 2000.

1969, an estimated 100,000 children were snatched from their families — some just a few days old — and raised in special schools or adopted by white families. One account of a 1935 event will suffice: "I was at the post office with my Mum and Auntie [and cousin]. They put us in the police [vehicle] and said they were taking us to Broome. They put the mums in there as well. But when we'd gone [about ten miles] they stopped, and threw the mothers out of the car. We jumped on our mothers' backs, crying, trying not to be left behind. But the policemen pulled us off and threw us back in the car. They pushed the mothers away and drove off, while our mothers were chasing the car, running and crying after us."

The snatching away of Aboriginal children reached its peak in the 1930s and was officially ended only in 1969, two years after Aborigines were granted Australian citizenship and voting rights. In the 1980s, a few historians started collecting and spreading first-hand accounts of the brutalization of this "Stolen Generation" which suffered severe physical, psychological and cultural trauma. In 1996, Aborigines officially numbered 353,000, but had lost most of their territories and much of their culture. Something of their honour was salvaged through the massive report Bring Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families prepared by Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and released in 1997.

Recording hundreds of testimonies, the report noted that "the physical infrastructure of [Christian] missions, government institutions and children's homes was often very poor and resources were insufficient to improve them or to keep the children adequately clothed, fed and sheltered." While a few of those adopted were lucky to find some care and affection, the fate met by the vast majority of the children was alienation, disorientation, hard labour and various degrees of violence or sexual abuse. According to the report, "Many children experienced brutality

and abuse in children's homes and foster placements. In the WA [Western Australia] Aboriginal Legal Service sample of 483 people who had been forcibly removed, almost two-thirds (62.1%) reported having been physically abused. Children were more likely to have been physically abused on missions (62.8% of those placed on missions) than in foster care (33.8%) or government institutions (30.7%)." In particular, overall 17% of girls and 8% of boys reported experiencing some form of sexual abuse; but as always, most victims of such abuse do not report it at all.

Indeed, while plain racism was, here as in Canada, largely responsible for the dismal treatment of Native children, Christian missions compounded the situation. As the report notes, "With a view to encouraging the conversion of the children to Christianity and distancing them from their Indigenous lifestyle, children were housed in dormitories and contact with their families strictly limited." One pastor recorded in his submission, "It is a sad but truthful fact that the church and Christian people in the history of this State have contributed to the trauma, the decimation of the language and the culture among the Aboriginal community." Several church denominations issued somewhat contrite statements in the 1990s after the damage was done, as always. The Uniting Church acknowledged "a loss of identity, of self-respect and hope" among the children taken away; the Anglican Church admitted its "participation" in the "great wrong done to the indigenous people of Australia"; the Roman Catholic Church recognized "some responsibility" in "the great suffering that continues in the hearts of some people"; the Baptist Church merely regretted not having proclaimed the "Biblical view of the intrinsic worth of all people as individuals made in God's image." The Church Missionary Society (CMS) defended its action in these words: "The stated intentions of the mission were to protect Aboriginal people from exploitation and murder, to bring the Christian faith, and to provide European education and vocational training. ... Several of these children in later adult years recalled the sorrow of that separation. CMS, however, saw what they were doing as creating some positive opportunities for these children."

In effect, apology or no apology, all the churches maintained that they had acted out of the best intentions, "in a loving way," wanting to "reach out with Christian compassion." None referred to specific forms of abuse inflicted on Aboriginal children; none proposed concrete reparations. Nor did Pope John Paul II, who in November 2001 issued a formal apology on behalf of the Vatican to the affected families.

Prime minister John Howard at first rejected any suggestion of a government apology, fearing it would lead to massive litigation for compensation. Bowing to public pressure (including a "National Sorry Day" attended by over a million people in May 1998), he finally issued a tepid expression of regret in 1999. However, no financial compensation has been forthcoming to help mend the thousands of broken lives. In 2000, Australia was censured by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and the U.N. Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for its attitude towards the Stolen Generation.

We present here a few testimonies collected by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia.\* No further comment is required.

## CB

<sup>\*</sup>Its report, Bring Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997) can be read at:

www.austiii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/ or: www.hreoc.gov.au/pdf/social\_justice/bringing\_them\_home\_report.pdf. (All explanatory notes and the subtitles within the testimonies are from the report.)

There are several important studies of the Stolen Generation, among

## Millicent

At the age of four, I was taken away from my family and placed in Sister Kate's Home — Western Australia where I was kept as a ward of the state until I was eighteen years old. I was forbidden to see any of my family or know of their whereabouts. Five of us D. children were all taken and placed in different institutions in WA. The Protector of Aborigines and the Child Welfare Department in their 'Almighty Wisdom' said we would have a better life and future brought up as whitefellas [White fellows] away from our parents in a good religious environment. All they contributed to our upbringing and future was an unrepairable scar of loneliness, mistrust, hatred and bitterness. Fears that have been with me all of life. The empty dark and lonely existence was so full of many hurtful and unforgivable events, that I cannot escape from no matter how hard I try. Being deprived of the most cherished and valuable thing in life as an Aboriginal Child love and family bonds. I would like to tell my story of my life in Sister Kate's home, WA.

My name is Millicent D. I was born at Wonthella WA in 1945. My parents were CD and MP, both 'half-caste' Aborigines. I was one of seven children, our family lived in the sandhills at the back of the Geraldton Hospital. There was a lot of families living there happy and harmonious. It was like we were all part of one big happy family.

In 1949 the Protector of Aborigines with the Native Welfare Department visited the sandhill camps. All the families living there were to be moved to other campaites or to the Moore River Aboriginal Settlement. Because my parents were fair in complexion, the authorities decided us kids could

them Broken Circles: fragmenting indigenous families, 1800-2000 by Anna Hoebich (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000) and Many Voices: Reflections on Experiences of Indigenous Child Separation, eds. Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich (National Library of Australia, 2002). (Eds.)

pass as whitefellas. I was four years old and that was the last time I was to see my parents again. Because my sisters were older than me they were taken to the Government receiving home at Mount Lawley. My brother Kevin was taken to the boys home in Kenwick. Colin and I were taken to the Sister Kate's Home. We were put in separate accommodation and hardly ever saw each other. I was so afraid and unhappy and didn't understand what was happening.

We were told Sundays was visiting day when parents and relatives came and spent the day. For Colin and me that was a patch of lies because our family were not allowed to visit. We spent each Sunday crying and comforting each other as we waited for our family. Each time it was the same — no one came. That night we would cry ourselves to sleep and wonder why. We were too young to understand we were not allowed family visits.

A couple of years passed and I started primary school.

It had been such a long time since I had seen my brother Colin. I was so helpless and alone. My brother had been taken away to the boys' home in Kenwick and now I was by myself. I became more withdrawn and shy and lived in a little world of my own hoping one day Mum would come and take me out of that dreadful place. As the years passed I realised that I would never see my family again.

They told me that my family didn't care....

They told me that my family didn't care or want me and I had to forget them. They said it was very degrading to belong to an Aboriginal family and that I should be ashamed of myself, I was inferior to whitefellas. They tried to make us act like white kids but at the same time we had to give up our seat for a whitefella because an Aboriginal never sits down when a white person is present.

Then the religion began. We had church three times a day, before breakfast, lunchtime and after school. If we were naughty or got home from school late we had to kneel at the

altar for hours and polish all the floors and brass in the church. We had religion rammed down our throats from hypocrites who didn't know the meaning of the word. We used to get whipped with a wet ironing cord and sometimes had to hold other children (naked) while they were whipped, and if we didn't hold them we got another whipping. To wake us up in the morning we were sprayed up the backside with an old fashioned pump fly spray. If we complained we got more. Hurt and humiliation was a part of our every day life and we had to learn to live with it.

Several more years passed and I still had no contact with my family, I didn't know what they looked like or how I could ever find them. By this time I was old enough to go to High School. This meant I didn't have to look after several of the younger kids as I had previously done, bathing, feeding and putting them on the potty and then off to bed, chopping wood before school and housework which all of us kids [were obliged to do] and the housemothers sat back and collected wages — for doing nothing. My life was miserable, and I felt I was a nobody and things couldn't get any worse. But I was wrong.

The worst was yet to come.

While I was in first year high school I was sent out to work on a farm as a domestic. I thought it would be great to get away from the home for a while. At first it was. I was made welcome and treated with kindness. The four shillings I was paid went to the home. I wasn't allowed to keep it, I didn't care. I was never paid for the work I did at Sister Kate's so you don't miss what you didn't get, pocket money etc.

The first time I was sent to the farm for only a few weeks and then back to school. In the next holidays I had to go back. This time it was a terrifying experience, the man of the house used to come into my room at night and force me to have sex. I tried to fight him off but he was too strong.

When I returned to the home I was feeling so used and unwanted. I went to the Matron and told her what happened. She washed my mouth out with soap and boxed my ears and

told me that awful things would happen to me if I told any of the other kids. I was so scared and wanted to die. When the next school holidays came I begged not to be sent to that farm again. But they would not listen and said I had to.

I ran away from the home, I was going to try to find my family. It was impossible, I didn't even know where to go. The only thing was to go back. I got a good belting and had to kneel at the altar everyday after school for two weeks. Then I had to go back to that farm to work. The anguish and humiliation of being sent back was bad enough but the worse was yet to come.

This time I was raped, bashed and slashed with a razor blade on both of my arms and legs because I would not stop struggling and screaming. The farmer and one of his workers raped me several times. I wanted to die, I wanted my mother to take me home where I would be safe and wanted. Because I was bruised and in a state of shock I didn't have to do any work but wasn't allowed to leave the property.

When they returned me to the home I once again went to the Matron. I got a belting with a wet ironing cord, my mouth washed out with soap and put in a cottage by myself away from everyone so I couldn't talk to the other girls. They constantly told me that I was bad and a disgrace and if anyone knew it would bring shame to Sister Kate's Home. They showed me no comfort which I desperately needed. I became more and more distant from everyone and tried to block everything out of my mind but couldn't. I ate rat poison to try and kill myself but became very sick and vomited. This meant another belting.

After several weeks of being kept away from everyone I was examined by a doctor who told the Matron I was pregnant. Another belting, they blamed me for everything that had happened. I didn't care what happened to me anymore and kept to myself. All I wanted now was to have my baby and get away as far as I could and try and find my family.

My daughter was born [in 1962] at King Edward Memorial Hospital. I was so happy, I had a beautiful baby girl of my

own who I could love and cherish and have with me always.

But my dreams were soon crushed: the bastards took her from me and said she would be fostered out until I was old enough to look after her. They said when I left Sister Kate's I could have my baby back. I couldn't believe what was happening. My baby was taken away from me just as I was from my mother.

My baby was taken away from me just as I was from my mother.

Once again I approached the Matron asking for the address of my family and address of the foster family who had my daughter. She said that it was Government Policy not to give information about family and she could not help me. I then asked again about my baby girl and was told she did not know her whereabouts. In desperation I rang the King Edward Memorial Hospital. They said there was no record of me ever giving birth or of my daughter Toni. Then I wrote to the Native Welfare Department only to be told the same thing and that there were no records of the D. family because all records were destroyed by fire.

I now had no other options but to find a job and somewhere to live. After working for a while I left Western Australia and moved to Adelaide to try and get my life together and put the past behind me. I was very alone, shy and not many friends and would break down over the simplest thing. Every time I saw a baby I used to wonder, could that be my little girl. I loved her and so desperately wanted her back. So in 1972 I returned to Western Australia and again searched for my family and child. I returned to see the Matron from Sister Kate's. This time she told me that my daughter was dead and it would be in my best interest to go back to South Australia and forget about my past and my family. I so wanted to find them, heartbroken I wandered the streets hoping for the impossible. I soon realized that I could come face to face with a family member and wouldn't even know.

Defeated I finally returned to Adelaide. In my heart I believed that one day everything would be alright and I would be reunited with my family. My baby was dead. (That's what I was told.) I didn't even get to hold her, kiss her and had no photographs, but her image would always be with me, and I would always love her. They couldn't take that away from me.

(In January 1996, Millicent received an enquiry from the South Australian welfare authorities. A woman born in 1962 was searching for her birth mother. This was Toni, Millicent's daughter. The two have since been reunited.)

CB

#### William

(William was taken away as a young boy from Alice Springs to Adelaide in the 1950s.)

I can remember this utility with a coffin....

I can remember this utility [vehicle] with a coffin on top with flowers. As a little boy I saw it get driven away knowing there was something inside that coffin that belonged to me. I think I was about six years old at the time. This was the time of our separation, after our mother passed away. My family tried to get the Welfare to keep us here ... trying to keep us together. Aunty D in Darwin — they wouldn't allow her to keep us. My uncle wanted to keep me and he tried every way possible, apparently, to keep me. He was going to try and adopt me but they wouldn't allow it. They sent us away.

As a little kid I can't remember what was going on really, because I was a child and I thought I was going on a trip with the other brothers. I just had excitement for going on a trip. That's all I can think of at the time.

When St. Francis [orphanage] closed up, they sent us out to different places. My second eldest brother and I went to a Mrs R. And my only recollections of that lady was when we first went there. We were greeted at the door. The welfare

officer took us into this house and I can remember going into this room, and I'd never seen a room like it. It was big, and here me and my brother were going to share it. We put our bags down on the floor. We thought, "This is wonderful." As soon as the welfare officer left, Mrs R took us outside that room and put us in a two bed caravan out the back.

I was sleeping in the caravan. I was only a little boy then. In the middle of the night somebody come to the caravan and raped me. That person raped me and raped me. I could feel the pain going through me. I cried and cried and they stuffed my head in the pillow. And I had nobody to talk to. It wasn't the only night it happened.

Oh God, it seemed like night after night. It seemed like nobody cared. I don't know how long it went on for, but night after night I'd see the bogey man. I never saw the person. I don't know who that person was.

Then we were all taken away again to a new home, to another place. We were shunted from place to place, still trying to catch up with schooling, trying to find friends. I had no one. I just couldn't find anybody. And when I did have a friend I was shunted off somewhere else, to some other place. Wanting my mother, crying for my mother every night, day after day, knowing that she'd never come home or come and get me. Nobody told me my mother died. Nobody ...

They shifted us again and that was into town again. And then they put us in with this bloke.... They've got records of what he did to me. That man abused me. He made us do dirty things that we never wanted to do. Where was the counselling? Where was the help I needed? They knew about it. The guy went to court. He went to court but they did nothing for me, nothing. They sent us off to the Child Psychology Unit. I remember the child psychologist saying, "He's an Aboriginal kid, he'll never improve. He's got behavioural problems." I do anything?

# Why did I have behavioural problems?

I hit the streets of Adelaide. I drank myself stupid. I drank to take the pain, the misery out of my life. I couldn't stop. I smoked dope, got drugs. I tried everything. I did everything. I just couldn't cope with life. I lived under cardboard boxes. I used to eat out of rubbish bins. I'm so ashamed of what I've done.

I suffer today. I still suffer. I can't go to sleep at night. It's been on for years. I just feel that pain. Oh God, I wake up in the middle of the night, same time. My kids have asked me why I get up in the middle of the night and I can't explain it, I can't tell them — shamed. I can't sleep too well with it. I can't go to bed. I leave it 'til 12 o'clock sometimes before I go to bed. I lay there awake, knowing I'm gonna wake up at that time of the morning, night after night. I often wish I was dead. I often wish I was gone. But I can't because of my children. You can't explain this to your kids. Why did this happen? I had nobody.

I've had my secret all my life. I tried to tell but I couldn't. I can't even talk to my own brothers. I can't even talk to my sister. I fear people. I fear 'em all the time. I don't go out. I stay home. It's rarely I've got friends.

I wish I was blacker. I wish I had language. I wish I had my culture. I wish my family would accept me as I am. We can't get together as a family. It's never worked. We fight, we carry on. I've always wanted a family.

#### CB

#### **Evie**

... I was taken away in 1950 when I was 6 hours old from hospital and put into Retta Dixon until I was 2 months old and then sent to Garden Point. I lived in Garden Point until 1964. And from Garden Point, Tennant Creek, Hermannsburg. While in Garden Point I always say that some of it was the happiest time of my life; others it was the saddest time

of my life. The happiest time was, 'Yippee! all these other kids there'. You know, you got to play with them every day. The saddest times were the abuse. Not only the physical abuse, the sexual abuse by the priests over there. And they were the saddest because if you were to tell anyone, well, the priests threatened that they would actually come and get you.

Everyone could see what they were doing but were told to keep quiet. And just every day you used to get hidings with the stock-whip. Doesn't matter what you did wrong, you'd get a hiding with the stock-whip. If you didn't want to go to church, well you got slapped about the head. We had to go to church three times a day. I was actually relieved to leave the Island.

# Q. Did any girls get pregnant at Garden Point when you were there?

I remember one and they actually took her off the Island. And when I ask everyone, like even now when I ask people about her, they don't know what happened to her. All they remember is her being put on the helicopter and flown out and I've never heard her, about her name or anything about her anymore. They remember her but don't know what happened to her.

Q: Who was the Father?

The Priest. The same bastards who

Q: How do people know that?

Well, the reason they know is, Sister A, poor thing, who's dead — I know she was upset because that priest had that young girl living in his place. He used to come and get her out of the dormitory every night. He used to sneak in about half past twelve, one o'clock in the morning and take her. We'd get up in the morning and she'd be just coming in the door.

All the girls slept in one dormitory. All the boys slept in the other. And we couldn't lock the dormitory from the inside

— it had a chain through and padlock outside, so there was only the nuns or priest could get in there. I know he used to come and get her because I was three beds up from her.

There was another priest, but he's dead. The rest of the mob that were on the Island are all dead. He's the only one that's kicking and he should have been the one that's bloody dead for what he did. He not only did it to girls, he did it to boys as well. There was six of 'em involved. Nuns were assaulting the young fellas as well as the priest assaulting the young fellas and the girls.

There was four priests and two nuns involved. We were in their care. That fella's still walking around. He's now got charge of other kids. He's got charge of other kids in D.

In 1977 I had three children. In 1977 my oldest was three years old then. I had another one that was twelve months and another one that was two months old. All those kids were taken off me. . . . I couldn't get my kids back when I came out of hospital. And I fought the welfare system for ten years and still couldn't get 'em. I gave up after ten years. . . . And with my daughter, well she came back in '88 but things just aren't working out there. She blames me for everything that went wrong. She's got this hate about her — doesn't want to know. The two boys know where I am but turned around and said to us, 'You're not our mother — we know who our real mother is'.

So every day of your bloody life you just get hurt all the time....

03

#### John

We didn't have a clue where we came from. We thought the Sisters were our parents. They didn't tell anybody — any of the kids — where they came from. Babies were coming in nearly every day. Some kids came in at two, three, four days old — not months — but days. They were just placed in the home and it was run by Christian women and all the kids

thought it was one big family. We didn't know what it meant by 'parents' cause we didn't have parents and we thought those women were our mothers.

It was drummed into our heads that we were white.

I was definitely not told that I was Aboriginal. What the Sisters told us was that we had to be white. It was drummed into our heads that we were white. It didn't matter what shade you were. We thought we were white. They said you can't talk to any of them coloured people because you're white.

I can't remember anyone from the welfare [department] coming there. If they did I can't remember ... We hardly saw any visitors whatsoever. None of the other kids had visits from their parents. No visits from family. The worst part is, we didn't know we had a family.

When you got to a certain age — like I got to 10 years old ... they just told us we were going on a train trip. ... We all lined up with our little ports [school cases] with a bible inside. That's all that was in the ports, see. We really treasured that — we thought it was a good thing that we had something ... the old man from La Perouse took us from Sydney — well actually from Bomaderry to Kinchela Boys' Home. That's when our problems really started — you know!

This is where we learned that we weren't white.

This is where we learned that we weren't white. First of all they took you in through these iron gates and took our little ports [suitcases] off us. Stick it in the fire with your little bible inside. They took us around to a room and shaved our hair off. . . . They gave you your clothes and stamped a number on them. . . . They never called you by your name; they called you by your number. That number was stamped on everything.

If we answered an attendant back we were "sent up the line." Now I don't know if you can imagine, 79 boys punching the hell out of you—just knuckling you. Even your brother, your cousin. They had to — if they didn't do it, they were sent

up the line. When the boys who had broken ribs or broken noses — they'd have to pick you up and carry you right through to the last bloke. Now that didn't happen once — that happened every day.

Before I went to Kinchela, they used to use the cat-o'-nine-tails [a whip made of several knotted cords] on the boys instead of being sent up the line. This was in the 30s and early 40s.

They thought you were animals.

Kinchela was a place where they thought you were animals. You know it was like a place where they go around and kick us like a dog.... It was just like a prison. Truthfully, there were boys having sex with boys. ... But these other dirty mongrels didn't care. We had a manager who was sent to prison because he was doing it to a lot of the boys, sexual abuse. Nothing was done. There was a pommie bloke [= an Englishman] that was doing it. These attendants — if the boys told them, they wouldn't even listen. It just happened.... I don't like talking about it. ...

We were prisoners from when we were born.... The girls who went to Cootamundra and the boys who went to Kinchela — we were all prisoners. Even today they have our file number so we're still prisoners you know. And we'll always be prisoners while our files are in archives.

OB

#### Sarah

When I accessed my file, I found out that the police and the station people at B... Station felt that my mother was looking after me. And they were unsure of why I was being taken away. They actually asked if I could stay there. But because I was light-skinned with a white father, their policy was that I had to be taken away. I was then the third child in a family of, as it turned out to be, 13. I was the only one taken away from the area [at the age of 4 in 1947].

The year that I was taken away, my [maternal] uncle wrote a letter to the then Native Welfare and asked if I could be returned to him, because he had an Aboriginal wife and he was bringing up his child. And he gave an undertaking to send me to school when I was of school age and to ensure that I was looked after. The letter that went back from the Commissioner of Native Affairs said that I was light-skinned and shouldn't be allowed to mix with natives.

My mother didn't know what happened to me. My eldest brother and my auntie tried to look for me. But they were unable to find out where I'd been sent.

When I was sent to Sister Kate's in '47, the policies of Sister Kate, even though she'd died the year previous, were still very much in hand. There was possibly something like one hundred kids there and we were brought up in various stages by various house mothers — who were usually English ladies who were not really interested in us. So it was a situation where the younger kids were looked after by the older kids and they were really the only parents that we knew.

We were constantly told that we didn't have families and that we were white children. It wasn't until we went across the road to school that we were called the names of 'darkies' and 'niggers' and those sorts of names. So when we were at school we were niggers and when we were home we were white kids. The policy of the home was to take only the light-skinned children because Sister Kate's policy was to have us assimilated and save us from natives.

We were sent to school. We were given religious instruction seven days a week. We were all baptised, then confirmed in the Anglican faith. Usually the boys were sent out at an early age to work on farms; and the girls too, as domestics. So all of our training was consistent with the aim that we would become subservient to white people as domestics or farmhands....

Children would disappear from Sister Kate's in the early '50s but we didn't know where they went to. We later found

out. The scars on the kids are still there. If you were naughty — and naughty could mean anything — if you were extra cheeky or if you ran away overnight or played up with the boys — if you were just caught mixing with the boys too much — the girls were sent to the Home of the Good Shepherd. One girl that I grew up with was sent there for three years from the age of eleven. She never knew why. She just disappeared one morning. That was a lock-up situation at the Home of the Good Shepherd. They were never allowed out of the compound itself. At that time, they did all the washing and ironing for the private schools. That's the sort of hard life those kids had and there was constant physical abuse of the kids....

### The power was enormous.

Some of the boys that disappeared, we discovered they'd gone up to Stoneville, which was the boys' institution at that time. One boy at one time ended up in Heathcote [psychiatric institution]. I don't think we know to this day why he ended up in Heathcote. But it just seemed to be that the power was enormous. We were able to be dealt with just like that. . . .

When the Presbyterians took over the home in the mid '50s, they then added an extra lot of religion to us. We used to have religion from the Presbyterian faith as well as the Anglican faith.

So we weren't sure what we were. And the policies of Sister Kate's were still adhered to in as much as we were discouraged from having any contact with families.

(Sarah was finally traced by a nephew when she was in her thirties.)

And suddenly I met a mother I never knew existed and a whole family that I didn't know. My mother blamed herself all those years for what happened. Because I was the only one who was taken away, she thought it was her fault somehow.

### Jennifer

My grandmother, Rebecca, was born around 1890. She lived with her tribal people, parents and relations around the Kempsey area. Rebecca was the youngest of a big family. One day some religious [= Christian] people came, they thought she was a pretty little girl. She was a full-blood aborigine about five years old. Anyway those people took her to live with them.

Rebecca could not have been looked after too well. At the age of fourteen she gave birth to my mother Grace and later on Esther, Violet and May. She married my grandfather Laurie and at the age of twenty-three she died from TB. Grandfather took the four girls to live with their Aunty and Uncle on their mother's side. Grandfather worked and supported the four girls.

Mum said in those days the aboriginals did not drink. She often recalled going to the river and her Uncle spearing fish and diving for cobbler. Mum had eaten kangaroo, koala bear, turtles and porcupine. She knew which berries were edible, we were shown by her how to dig for yams and how to find witchetty grubs. My mother also spoke in several aboriginal languages she knew as a small girl. The aboriginals had very strict laws and were decent people. They were kind and had respectable morals. Even though the girls fretted for their mother they felt secure with their own people.

Years later Grandfather told my mother a policeman came to his work with papers to sign. The girls were to be placed in Cootamundra Home where they would be trained to get a job when they grew up. If grandfather didn't sign the papers he would go to jail and never come out, this was around 1915.

My grandfather was told he was to take the four girls by boat to Sydney. The girls just cried and cried and the relations were wailing just like they did when Granny Rebecca had died.

In Sydney my mother and Esther were sent by coach to Cootamundra. Violet and May were sent to the babies' home

at Rockdale. Grace and Esther never saw their sister Violet again. She died at Waterfall Hospital within two years from TB. . . .

Cootamundra in those days was very strict and cruel. The home was overcrowded. Girls were coming and going all the time. The girls were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. All the girls had to learn to scrub, launder and cook.

Mum remembered once a girl who did not move too quick. She was tied to the old bell post and belted continuously. She died that night, still tied to the post, no girl ever knew what happened to the body or where she was buried.

Aunty Esther was a big girl for her age, so she was sent out as a cook to work at twelve years of age. Mum being of smaller build was sent out as children's nurse at fourteen. She had responsibility for four young children; one only a baby for 24 hours a day. Mum said they used to put girls ages up if they were big for their age and send them out to work on properties. Some girls were belted and sexually abused by their masters and sent to the missions to have their babies. Some girls just disappeared never to be seen or heard of again.

Eventually after several years Mum was sent to Rose Bay to work. Whilst in Sydney she met her sister Esther who was working in the Chatswood area. As far as I know neither Mum or Aunt Esther ever got paid for those hard working years under the Board.

My mother often recalled the joyous time Aunty May came to Kempsey to see her sisters and father. The three young women hugged one another and cried with happiness and sadness for their sister and their mother.

Early one morning in November 1952....

Early one morning in November 1952 the manager from Burnt Bridge Mission came to our home with a policeman. I could hear him saying to Mum, "I am taking the two girls and placing them in Cootamundra Home." My father was saying, "What right have you?" The manager said he can do what he

likes, they said my father had a bad character (I presume they said this as my father associated with Aboriginal people). They would not let us kiss our father goodbye, I will never forget the sad look on his face. He was unwell and he worked very hard all his life as a timber-cutter. That was the last time I saw my father, he died within two years after.

We were taken to the manager's house at Burnt Bridge. Next morning we were in court. I remember the judge saying, "These girls don't look neglected to me." The manager was saying all sorts of things. He wanted us placed in Cootamundra Home. So we were sent away not knowing that it would be five years before we came back to Kempsey again.

Mum used to write to us every week. Sometimes it would be 2 months before we received the letters, of course they were opened and read first. Sometimes parts would be torn out of the letters by matron or whoever was in charge.

Cootamundra was so different from the North Coast, it was cold and dry. I missed the tall timbers and all the time I was away there was this loneliness inside of me. I had often thought of running away but Kate was there and I was told to always look after her. I had just turned eleven and Kate was still only seven. I often think now of Cootamundra as a sad place, I think of thousands of girls who went through that home, some girls that knew what family love was and others that never knew; they were taken away as babies.

Some of the staff were cruel to the girls. Punishment was caning or belting and being locked in the box-room or the old morgue. Matron had her pets and so did some of the staff. I look back now and see we were all herded together like sheep and each had to defend themselves and if you didn't you would be picked on by somebody that didn't like you, your life would be made a misery. I cannot say from my memories Cootamundra was a happy place.

In the home on Sundays we often went to two different churches, hymns every Sunday night. The Seventh Day Adventist and Salvation Army came through the week. With all the different religions it was very confusing to find out my own personal and religious beliefs throughout my life.

My mother sent us a new outfit every change of season, we only received one parcel. The matron kept our clothes and distributed them to her pets. In winter it was icy cold and for the first time in my life I didn't have socks to wear to school.

One day the matron called me to her office.

One day the matron called me to her office. She said it was decided by the Board that Kate and myself were to go and live with a lady in a private house. The Board thought we were too 'white' for the home. We were to be used as an experiment and if everything worked out well, more girls would be sent later on.

We travelled all day long. We didn't know what place we were going to, all I knew was we were going further and further away from home. Late afternoon we stopped at this house in Narromine. There lived Mrs S., her son and at weekends her husband Lionel.

The twenty months Kate and I spent at Narromine were honestly the worst time of my childhood life. I often thought I would not survive long enough ever to see my mother again.

The Scottish woman hated me because I would not call her 'Mum'. She told everyone I was bad.

She made us stay up late sewing, knitting and darning that pillowcase full of endless socks. Often we weren't allowed to bed 'till after 11 p.m. I was always late for school, the headmaster used to greet me with 'Good afternoon Jennifer'. Mrs S. did not allow me to do homework, therefore my schoolwork suffered and myself — a nervous wreck.

When I was thirteen years old Mrs S. called this middle-aged male doctor to the house and said she wanted an internal examination of me. That was terribly shameful for me, I will not say anymore. During the time [with her] I was belted naked repeatedly, whenever she had the urge. She was quite mad. I had to cook, clean, attend to her customers' laundry.

I was used and humiliated. The Board knew she was refused any more white children yet they sent us there.

Near the end of our stay she got Mr F. from Dubbo to visit. She tried to have me put in Parramatta Girls' Home. By this time I knew other people had complained to the Board. Mr F. asked me if I wanted to go to a white home or back to Cootamundra. So a couple of days later we were back in the Home. It was hard to believe we had gotten away from that woman.

It wasn't long after we were back at the Home and Matron called me to her office. She wanted to know what had happened at Narromine. I told her everything. She said the experiment did not work and she would write to the Board for fear they would send more girls out. It did not do any good though because more than half the girls were fostered out over the next three years. Some of the girls were sexually abused, belted and called names by their foster parents. Of course the brainwashing continued about Aboriginals being lazy, dirty and of low intelligence going nowhere.

In December 1957 our mother finally got us home.

In December 1957 our mother finally got us home. She was the first Aboriginal to move into a Commission house. My mother died four years later, she suffered high blood pressure, she was 54 years old. It was fight all the way to survive because she was born an Aboriginal.

I still can't see why we were taken away from our home. We were not neglected, we wore nice clothes, we were not starving. Our father worked hard and provided for us and we came from a very close and loving family.

I feel our childhood has been taken away from us and it has left a big hole in our lives.

#### Carol

(Carol's grandmother was removed to Beagle Bay at the age of 10. She and her husband had 10 children. When her husband was transferred to the Derby leprosarium, all ten children were placed in the Beagle Bay dormitories. Carol's mother was 8 years old when she was removed. Carol was born in Broome in the mid-1950s. When she was three, her mother died leaving four children. Although her grandmother was still alive, Carol and her siblings were removed to the Beagle Bay dormitories. Carol spent the next 14 years there.)

Five generations of my family have been affected by removal of children. Four generations of my family have been removed from their mothers and institutionalised. Three generations of my family have been put into Beagle Bay Mission dormitories. Four generations of my family went without parently love, without mother or father. I myself found it very hard to show any love to my children because I wasn't given that, so was my mother and grandmother.

When I think back on my childhood days — sad, lonely and unloved childhood days — we should have been treated better than we were by the Church. We were mistreated badly. I was abused by the missionaries from all angles — sexual, physical and mental. I am a strong person in myself. I had to be strong, I had no one to turn to, no one to guide me through life.

6.30 am every morning, straight from bed, we had to kneel and say our morning prayers. 7 am we had to go to church for mass. If we didn't we would be punished, like going without a piece of bread for breakfast or get the strap or whipped on our palms. 7.30 am we had to thank God before and after our breakfast. 8.30 am before and after class we said our prayers. 10 am we had to say another prayer before we had our cups of milk and morning tea break. 11 am we had catechism taught to us which was part of praying and learning the history of our church. 12 pm again we said our prayers

before and after our lunch. 1 pm we said another prayer before and after class. 5 pm we prayed again before and after our supper. 6 pm most times we had to go to church for Benediction or rosary. 7 pm we would kneel and say the last prayer of the day, which was our night prayers.

We were locked up every night. Also during the day on weekends and public holidays. That was only when we didn't

go out on picnics.

7 am breakfast — very light which was only sago with milk or most times porridge. 10 am morning tea time: one cup of Carnation milk. 12 am lunch, very light sometimes one piece of bread covered with lard along with a small piece of boiled meat. We loved it all the same.

5 pm supper, very light which was 'bubble-bubbles' which was only flour, sugar and water, and if we were lucky we would have a piece of fruit.

We had nothing else to eat, only if we stole vegetables from the garden. We had two big vegetable gardens. Every vegetable was grown there yet we were never given any. We never had vegetables. Things that we never saw on our meal table yet were sold elsewhere from Beagle Bay Mission. When it was my turn to work in the convent kitchen I saw that all the vegetables that our people grew were on their meal tables.

Everyone would think we were doing the laundries for a big hospital, how many times and how we washed the missionaries' laundry. Every Sunday evening we had to soak the missionaries' laundry. Every Monday morning we washed clothes by hands or scrubbing board. We then had to rinse and put it into the big boilers. Then rinsed, then starched, then rinsed, then squeezed and hung out to dry. We had to iron all the clothes, plus mending and darning.

We made our own clothes for the girls and the boys that were in the dormitory. We never was given footwear, only when and if we were making our first communion, confirmation or crowning of Our Lady. It felt real good to wear shoes and nice dresses for only an hour or so.

We were treated like animals when it came to lollies [lollipops]. We had to dive in the dirt when lollies were thrown to us. The lollies went straight into our mouths from the dirt. We had to, if it was birthday or feast day of the missionaries, wish them a happy day, take our lollies and run, knowing what could happen. We had to sometimes kiss the missionaries on the lips, or touch their penises. I remember clearly on one occasion, I was told to put my hands down his pants to get my lolly.

The nuns taught us that our private parts were forbidden to touch. If we were caught washing our private parts, we would get into trouble from the nuns. I grew up knowing that our private parts were evil, yet missionaries could touch us when they felt like it. That is why when I grew up that I automatically thought when a man wanted sex that I had to give it to him, because that's what, y'know. Sometimes I had sex not for pleasure, but just to please the man.

Even at the dormitory, when we used to complain to the nuns about what the brothers and the priests had done to us, we were told to shut our mouths. That's why they used to always tell me I'm a troublemaker. Those same priests, they're still alive, they're still working down south. Even the nuns are still here in Broome; there's a couple of them still there.

It never happened to me, but I remember the priest ... used to just walk into the dormitory and pick any girl out of the crowd, "You, come with me," and take them. And I noticed, when those girls used to come back they were very upset. I can't say what really happened there, but 'til this very day, those people don't go to church.

The thing that hurt me the most while growing up is that we were pulled away from our sisters and brothers. My sister's a year younger than I, yet I could not hold her, cry with her, play with her, sleep with her, comfort her when someone hit her, and eat with her. We weren't allowed to be close to our sisters or brothers. The missionaries pulled and kept us apart.

557

[Carol has tried to document her stay at Beagle Bay but has been told there is no record she was ever there.] I haven't got anything to say I've been to Beagle Bay. It's only memories and people that I was there with. I don't exist in this world. I haven't got anything, nothing to say who I am.

#### 03

(Snatches from a few other, unnamed voices.)

These are people telling you to be Christian and they treat you less than a bloody animal. One boy his leg was that gangrene we could smell him all down the dormitories before they finally got him treated properly.

#### CB

I've seen girls naked, strapped to chairs and whipped. We've all been through the locking up period, locked in dark rooms. I had a problem of fainting when I was growing up and I got belted every time I fainted and this is belted, not just on the hands or nothing. I've seen my sister dragged by the hair into those block rooms and belted because she's trying to protect me.... How could this be for my own good? Please tell me.

#### CB

The thing that hurts the most is that they didn't care about who they put us with. As long as it looked like they were doing their job, it just didn't matter. They put me with one family and the man of the house used to come down and use me whenever he wanted to.... Being raped over and over and there was no one I could turn to. They were supposed to look after me and protect me, but no one ever did.

I remember when my sister come down and visited me and I was reaching out. There was no one there. I was just reaching out and I could see her standing there and I couldn't tell her that I'd been raped. And I never told anyone for years and years. And I've had this all inside me for years and years and years. I've been sexually abused, harassed, and then finally raped, y'know, and I've never had anyone to talk to about it ... nobody, no father, no mother, no one. We had no one to guide us. I felt so isolated, alienated. And I just had no one. That's why I hit the booze. None of that family bonding, nurturing — nothing. We had nothing.

#### 03

Why me; why was I taken? It's like a hole in your heart that can never heal.

#### CB

Actually what you see in a lot of us is the shell, and I believe as an Aboriginal person that everything is inside of me to heal me if I know how to use it, if I know how to maintain it, if I know how to bring out and use it. But sometimes the past is just too hard to look at.

#### क्ष ध्य

# "Kill the Indian, save the man"

The mistreatment of Native children in the U.S.A. broadly followed (in fact, preceded) the sadly predictable lines seen in Canada or Australia, the chief difference being that the U.S. government never attempted to systematically document it.

The story begins in 1819 with the passage of the "Civilization Act" (another cruel misnomer), which outlined the policy of "assimilation" of the Natives and allowed government funding for missionary-run schools where Native children would be transformed into Americans. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was established six years later. Captain Richard H. Pratt, an army veteran of the Indian wars, founded in 1879 a notorious Industrial Training School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, which served as a model for other boarding schools, and famously declared, "Kill the Indian, save the man." Soon, the BIA opened 25 boarding schools, while churches managed 460 boarding and day schools on reservations with government funds. As David Wallace Adams\* wrote in a major study of the American boarding schools:

Indians must be taught the knowledge, values, mores and habits of Christian civilization. . . . For tribal elders who had witnessed the catastrophic developments of the nineteenth century — the bloody warfare, the near extinction of the bison, the scourge of disease and starvation, the shrinking of the tribal base, the indignities of reservation life, the invasion of missionaries and white settlers — there seemed to be no end to the cruelties perpetrated by whites. And after all this, the schools. After all this, the white man had concluded that the only way to save Indians was to destroy them,

<sup>\*</sup> Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928 by David Wallace Adams (University Press of Kansas, 1995).

that the last great Indian war should be waged against children. They were coming for the children. Two themes permeated commencement rhetoric. The first was transformation; Indians arrived in a state of savagism, but now returned thoroughly civilized. This had been the school's quintessential mission. "The Indian is DEAD in you," the Reverend A. J. Lippincott proclaimed at one Carlisle commencement. "Let all that is Indian within you die!...You cannot become truly American citizens, industrious, intelligent, cultured, civilized until the INDIAN within you is DEAD."

A review of Adams's book adds: "The assault on identity came in many forms: the shearing off of braids, the assignment of new names, uniformed drill routines, humiliating punishments, relentless attacks on native religious beliefs, patriotic indoctrinations, suppression of tribal languages, Victorian gender rituals, football contests, and industrial training."

Another author, Michael Coleman,\* stressed the missionary component of the campaign: "Christian proselytizing suffused the educational effort during these decades. Missionaries, of course, attempted to indoctrinate denominational creeds into

<sup>\*</sup> Michael Coleman, American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930 (University Press of Mississippi, 1993). Apart from Adams's and Coleman's books, recent studies in the field include: They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School by K. Tsianina Lomawaima (University of Nebraska Press, reprint 1995); Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940 by Brenda J. Child (University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences by Heard Museum et al. (Heard Museum, 2000); Children of the Dragonfly: Native American Voices on Child Custody and Education, ed. by Robert Bensen (University of Arizona Press, May 2001); Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools by Ward Churchill (City Lights Publishers, 2004); American Indian Education: A History by Jon Allan Reyhner & Jeanne M. Oyawin Eder (University of Oklahoma Press, 2004). There are many websites dealing with the issue; see for instance:

young Indians. But even as the government edged the mission societies to the margin, its teachers also sought to imbue pupils with some form of Christianity. For most secular as well as missionary educators, 'civilization' was inconceivable unless grounded in Christian — especially Protestant — values."

As in Canada and Australia, U.S. children (including in Alaska) were often torn away from their families. At school, starvation and disease were widespread; punishment was severe, especially for speaking in Native languages, which led to the near-extinction of some of them: in the words of a Commissioner for Indian Affairs, real education was conceivable only in English, "the language of the greatest, most powerful, and enterprising nationalities under the sun." Tales of physical and sexual abuse abound, with no apology forthcoming from the churches or the government, much less any talk of compensation. For example, an article in the Washington Post (June 2, 2003) noted, "After years of holding their silence, hundreds of American Indians are giving accounts of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the priests and nuns who ran a dozen missionary boarding schools across South Dakota through most of the 20th century. Allegations of priestly sexual abuse in parishes have rocked the Catholic Church over the past year. But what the former students say occurred at the reservation schools into the 1970s was more systemic: They say physical abuse was a routine part of school discipline; that sexual abuse was commonplace; and that both forms of abuse were committed against children in the round-theclock, unsupervised care of school staff members." In 2003, some of those former students filed a class action lawsuit against the U.S. government, claiming compensation, but the court rejected their claim on technical grounds.

In a recent article\* written for Amnesty International, U.S.A., and titled "Soul Wound: The Legacy of Native American Schools," Andrea Smith, a Cherokee scholar, wrote:

<sup>\*</sup> See: www.amnestyusa.org/amnestynow/soulwound.html.

Church officials, missionaries, and local authorities took children as young as five from their parents and shipped them off to Christian boarding schools. ... Virtually imprisoned in the schools, children experienced a devastating litany of abuses, from forced assimilation and grueling labor to widespread sexual and physical abuse. ... Rampant sexual abuse at reservation schools continued until the end of the 1980s. in part because of pre-1990 loopholes in state and federal law mandating the reporting of allegations of child sexual abuse. ... The abuse has dealt repeated blows to the traditional social structure of Indian communities. Before colonization, Native women generally enjoyed high status, according to scholars, and violence against women, children, and elders was virtually non-existent. Today, sexual abuse and violence have reached epidemic proportions in Native communities, along with alcoholism and suicide. . . . Sammy Toineeta (Lakota) helped found the national Boarding School Healing Project to document such abuses. "Human rights activists must talk about the issue of boarding schools," says Toineeta. "It is one of the grossest human rights violations because it targeted children and was the tool for perpetrating cultural genocide. To ignore this issue would be to ignore the human rights of indigenous peoples, not only in the U.S., but around the world." ... Physical hardship, however, was merely the backdrop to a systematic assault on Native culture. School staff sheared children's hair, banned traditional clothing and customs, and forced children to worship as Christians. Eliminating Native languages — considered an obstacle to the "acculturation" process — was a top priority, and teachers devised an extensive repertoire of punishments for uncooperative children.... Native scholars describe

the destruction of their culture as a "soul wound," from which Native Americans have not healed.

Incredibly, "social workers were still removing thousands of children from their families well into the 1970s." Finally, the U.S. government yielded to pressure and abandoned its policy of forced assimilation to replace it with one of self-determination. On September 8, 2000, the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the BIA, Kevin Gover, assistant secretary of the Indian Affairs Department, commented: "This agency forbade the speaking of Indian languages, prohibited the conduct of traditional religious activities, outlawed traditional government, and made Indian people ashamed of who they were. Worst of all, the Bureau of Indian Affairs committed these acts against the children entrusted to its boarding schools, brutalizing them emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually."

CB

# A Saga of Scandals

Christianity has been chronically incapable of creating a happy environment in the lands it conquered. In the U.S.A., the phasing out of the Indian boarding schools coincided with the emergence of a new, nationwide scandal: the widespread sexual abuse of children by Christian priests; here, the victims were children of all backgrounds, and rather than the school, the setting was often related to a church.

In the 1990s, complaints began to be heard about lewd conduct and paedophilia among priests; the trickle soon became a flood, with thousands of victims mustering enough courage to speak up. In 2002, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (New York) conducted a first comprehensive national study of the issue; according to its report, 4,392 priests of the American Catholic Church, i.e. 4% of the U.S. total, sexually abused 10,667 children during the past 52 years; 81% of the victims were boys, two-thirds of them teenagers. Most of the abuse occurred in the 1970s, with lesser figures in the 1980s and 1990s; one member, however, warned that figures for those two decades might grow as "there is generally a lapse of several years between a sex abuse incident and the making of a public allegation." Since the 1990s, 432 accused priests resigned, retired or were removed from ministry; fourteen bishops also had to resign. Many dioceses paid tens of millions of dollars to settle claims; adding legal costs, the total financial burden on the Church is estimated to have been over a billion dollars so far.

Spokespersons for the victims charged that the figures published were nowhere near reality: "Thousands of victims haven't reported and dozens of bishops aren't telling all they know," said David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.\* "They have no incentive

<sup>\*</sup> Its website, www.snapnetwork.org, contains a vast resource of material on the topic and links to important books and other publications.

to." Moreover, in a separate report, the National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, composed of lay persons, criticized the bishops for doing little to stop widespread sexual abuse of children over a half-century, a performance they said was "shameful to the church." They pointed out that the Church failed to report about known child abusers among its priests, and all too often transferred them to distant parishes, where they simply went on abusing fresh victims.

Indeed, the hushing up of scandals is a Church tradition. In 1962, for instance, Pope John XXIII sent a confidential 69-page document to every bishop in the world, enjoining the "strictest" secrecy in dealing with allegations of sexual abuse and threatening those who spoke out with excommunication; when it came to light in 2003, some British lawyers called it a "blueprint for deception and concealment." And when concealment is no longer possible, other proven techniques remain, such as the throwing of red herrings. In November 2002, for example, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then key adviser to Pope John Paul II and currently Pope Benedict XVI, noted that "less than 1 percent" of priests had abused minors, and that there were fewer sex offenders among priests than other groups.\* In reality, the statistic is misleading, as the proportion of Catholic priests accused of sexual abuse in the U.S. alone is over 4%, and would go substantially higher if all victims came forward; but what made Ratzinger's statement obnoxious is that it trivialized the issue: it amounted to saying that if there are, say, criminals among the police, that need not be a cause for worry since their proportion would, in any case, be much lower than the national average. Ratzinger chose to forget that just as a policeman is duty-bound to protect rather than rob or kill, a priest is expected to offer guidance and spiritual solace rather than lust and betrayal.

The scandal did not confine itself to the U.S.A. Sexual abuse

<sup>\*</sup> As quoted by Laurie Goodstein in "Trail of Pain in Church Crisis Leads to Nearly Every Diocese," New York Times, January 12, 2003.

of children by Catholic priests surfaced notably in Canada, Jamaica, Argentine, England, Ireland, Sweden, Austria, Poland, Spain, France, Belgium, Philippines, Australia, and parts of Latin America, Africa and Asia. In 1996, after sustained allegations, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference stated. "We acknowledge with deep sadness and regret that a number of clergy and religious [nuns and brothers] have sexually abused children, adolescents, and adults who have been in their pastoral care"; a victims group, Broken Rites, listed more than 50 Australian priests and brothers as having been prosecuted for sexual crimes. In Ireland, an official inquiry into sexual abuse by priests led to the conviction of over 50 Catholic priests; in 2002, the church offered 110 million dollars to compensate thousands of people abused as children in Catholic schools and child-care centres. Between 1995 and 1999 alone, 21 Catholic priests were convicted of similar offences in England. In France, a bishop was convicted for failing to report a paedophile priest to authorities; at least forty priests have been sentenced to prison terms between France and Belgium. The list goes on and on. In 2002, Rev. Joseph J. Guido wrote in America magazine, a Jesuit weekly, "Research suggests ... that the sexual abuse of children is a problem for the church everywhere."

It would however be an error to believe that the Catholic Church has been the sole culprit. Although abusers are rarer in Protestant denominations (which allow their clergy to marry), they do exist but perhaps involve adults more often than children: in a 1983 doctoral thesis, U.S. researcher Richard Blackmon found 12% of the 300 Protestant clergy surveyed admitted to sexual intercourse with a parishioner and 38% admitted to other sexualized contact with a parishioner; in separate denominational surveys, 48% of United Church of Christ female ministers and 77% of United Methodist female ministers reported having been sexually harassed in church. In other words, sexual abuse was acknowledged by the denominational leaders of all Christian churches.

Nearer home, in 2004, a Sri Lankan Inspector General of Police said that he had reliable evidence pointing to the involvement of certain Christian fundamentalist sects in various nefarious activities including child sex. In India, cases of child abuse by churchmen and missionaries have periodically come to light; Goa's Catholic Church, for instance, acknowledged as early as in 1996 that some 30% of child abusers were in positions of authority, including schoolmasters, teachers, and priests.\* But such scandals have been generally hushed up; if the abuser was a foreign missionary, more often than not he was just deported (as happened in several cases from Orissa and Kerala). Moreover, the judicial system taking years to dispose of a case, a victim is reluctant to face humiliation for such a length of time; compensation is also unheard of. Worse, some cases have been portrayed on missionary websites as "persecution of Christians in India," in another timetested tactic which turns an aggressor into a martyr.

What this sordid world saga of sexual abuse conveys is that Christian preachers need to introspect, to put a stop to the misery inflicted by their churches, to offer suitable reparations worldwide, and to get an honest measure of the ground to be covered before their "religion" can graduate to wholesome ethics.

Also, the Christian missionary would do well to ponder on how the creed he or she is peddling is superior to India's native religions, whose record appears almost blemishless in comparison with the horrific abuse inflicted on millions for centuries in the name of Jesus.

(%

<sup>\*</sup> Pamela D'Mello, "Call to end exploiting prostitution as tourist attraction," The Asian Age, 24 February 1996.

# AN OPEN LETTER TO THE POPE

A poignant testimony of one of the innumerable victims of ordained men who had sworn to dedicate their lives to "religion."\*

From:

Belinda Martinez 1212 Ferndale Street, North Maplewood, Minnesota 55119 USA idgas999@hotmail.com

April 19, 2002

To: His Holiness John Paul II Apostolic Palace 00120 Vatican City State Europe

#### Dear Sir:

I am one of the vast numbers of Catholics who have been sexually abused by a priest. I am appalled at every news article or story I hear; yet at the same time, I know it will mark an increased intensity in the healing of the victim involved. I am hoping that the Holy Roman Catholic Church can be an instrument of the healing as well. So far it has not.

Please ask that your cardinals release the names of priests, formerly or presently accused of being involved in criminal sexual acts, so that the sin of secrecy does not continue.

<sup>\*</sup> Reproduced from www.advocateweb.org/HOPE/openlettertopope.asp.

There are still so many undisclosed perpetrators of terrible deeds. We have lost human lives to suicide, mental illnesses and over-medicated adult lives in the name of your secrecy.

Please tell your church attorneys to cease the inclusion of any gag orders in any legal settlements with victims. It is not mentally healthy to be bound by a promise that suppresses pain.

Please beg that victims come forward, even if their perpetrator has died. Victims feel no sense of healing if they can feel no sense of justice. The healing will never happen if the healing has no way to begin.

Please do not become complacent on this issue. There is too much work to do. We have only shown a small portion of the ugliness. There are victims suffering great grief as a result of abuse by nuns as well. So much more light needs to be shed.

Please make bold decisions and set clear examples that should be the hallmark of a faith that calls Jesus Christ its Redeemer. There are many denominations in the same predicament as the Roman Catholic Church, and I know that they will be looking to see how much value you place on humanity.

It is not okay to concentrate on what you can retain of your reputation, dignity, assets, authority, or respect, if you first do not make monumental efforts to restore those very same things to the innocents from whom they were stolen.

Please forgive me if I simply cannot comply with the protocol of addressing you as 'Holy Father'. I was repeatedly drugged and sexually abused by a priest who ran a retreat facility for youth. Years later, I was sexually assaulted by a hospital chaplain the day after I had an outpatient surgical procedure. I had to wipe his semen from my face, while protecting my surgical sutures. I call no one 'father', holy or otherwise. It would only serve to subordinate me to the victim I used to be.

I still pray.... I pray for the souls of my perpetrators. I pray for the congregation that valued my perpetrator more than

me. I pray for the diocese that paid attorneys a lot of money to call me a liar, when in the end it was proven that I was not. I pray for my daughter, who was affected by the calculated evil of humans, and the organized deceit of their authorities. I pray for those who have suffered indignities beyond description or imagination, by those who could turn around and preach about honesty, generosity, compassion, and grace. I pray for families who are cheated out of knowing the full potential of their abused loved ones, because they are either dead, hospitalized, living from crisis to crisis, or simply too medicated to function. I pray for victims who sever ties to any organized faith. I pray for victims who try to maintain membership in a worship community that does not understand how bittersweet the rituals have become as a result of their abuse. I pray for your ordained ministers who have been left to fix the mess that has been publicly ignored for far too long. I pray for journalists who provide disproportionate trial coverage, causing a naive public to further abuse a victim. I pray for a church that has not valued fifty per cent of its constituents — females. Mostly I pray, because I know I am still heard by the God who made me, even though it would benefit the world to listen.

In Christ,

Belinda Martinez

क्र व्य

# THE RETREAT OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WEST

This piece is a series of extracts from various sources, many of them Christian, which document the decline of Christianity in the Western world, especially Europe, and the rise of alternative faiths and spiritualities.\*

# "No hope to be found in the church"\*\*

A big deal was made of the fact that the first draft of the new European Union Constitution did not include a single mention of God. But most Europeans act as if the Christian God of history no longer exists. Although Europeans say they believe in some type of "God," church attendance in most European countries is less than 5%.

Less than half of the British public can name any of the four New Testament Gospels. Almost a third of all Dutch no longer know why we have Christmas day. There is a new "dark continent" — the land that used to be known as Christian Europe. Today, many of its cathedrals are simply large museum pieces. They are "artifacts of an ancient religion, and a dead faith."

Jessica Elgood is an analyst at the British research firm, MORI. She said, ... "Only 3% of the public regularly attend church. And of those 3%, half of those are black-black Britons — who only make up about 5% of the population."

Richard Miniter lives in Brussels and is a correspondent for The London Sunday Times. He said, "When, as an American

<sup>\*</sup> The extracts do not necessarily represent the whole view of their respective authors; we have only selected the portions relevant to the theme of this compilation. The titles of the extracts are ours. (Eds.)
\*\* From Dale Hurd, "Is Europe the New 'Dark Continent'?," The Christian Broadcasting Network, March 1, 2004

in Europe, you tell Europeans that you go to church on Sunday, they look at you like a museum piece-something strange." Miniter also said, "There are more practising Muslims in France than there are baptized Catholics. Out of a nation of more than 60 million Frenchmen, less than four million are baptized Catholics. A generation ago, that just wouldn't have been so."

Near Brussels, at Christian Center, an Assemblies of God church, Belgian Pastor Paul Devos preaches to a culture that no longer believes Christian faith is the answer to anything. Devos said, "In the United States, people would more quickly turn toward, at least Christ, in general, and Christianity, because it's still somewhat part of the culture, in general. Here in Europe, we have gone beyond that point, and people do not expect anything from religion, apart from some very abstract hope that there is something after this life. [They think] for this life, there is no hope to be found in the church."

A poll conducted in 2002 found that while 61% of Americans had hope for the future, only 42% of U.K. residents had that hope. On the European continent it was even worse, with only 29% of the French saying they have hope for the future, and only 15% of Germans. ...

Yet the European media never tires of mocking America's high church attendance as "something weird," or portraying President Bush's faith as a "weapon of mass destruction." In a typical comment, written in the Sunday Herald, the writer says President Bush is "under the influence of the crackpot TV evangelism that is so peculiar to America." European elites are especially worried that Bush prays a lot. A writer for Britain's *The Economist magazine* wrote, "To Europeans, religion is the strangest and most disturbing feature about [America]." European elites worry that "fundamentalists" are "hijacking" the country. They find it extraordinary that three times as many Americans believe in the virgin birth as in evolution. ...

When Elgood's firm asked the British to name an "inspirational" figure, Jesus finished at the bottom. The Mori poll found that 65% of Britons named Nelson Mandela, 14% picked Prime Minister Tony Blair, 10% said "none of the above," and 6% said Britney Spears. Astonishingly, only 1% named Jesus Christ as an inspirational figure.

Religion is an especially dirty word in European politics; many European leaders are atheists.... Though the church buildings still remain, European secularists assumed that Modernism would do away with religion. But secularism has created a spiritual void, a vacuum in Europe that beckons faith to return. There is a real worry that if Europe tires of this spiritual chaos, then the religion they will turn to is Islam. Islam is the fastest growing religion in Europe.

# A post-Christian society\*

[A hundred years ago] Europe was the center of the Christian world from which in the previous three hundred years missionaries had ventured forth to convert the heathen. Today the Christian world is increasingly the Third World where the new Christians tilt dramatically towards evangelical and traditional forms of belief.

Christian conversions from other religions, mainly Islam, are proceeding rapidly in Africa and Southeast Asia. In Latin America, evangelical conversions within Christianity are transforming bad Catholics into good Protestants. As a result, Christian missionary traffic has gone into reverse gear. Catholic churches in Europe rely on priests from the Philippines and India, and African bishops attend Anglican convocations to reprove their Western counterparts for liberal theology and sexual libertinism. It was a sign of this new world that the traditionalist candidate for the Archbishopric

<sup>\*</sup> From John O'Sullivan, "Saving Our Religions: What may keep us praying," National Review Online, July 25, 2002.

of Canterbury, defeated this week by a saintly but liberal academic theologian, hailed from Pakistan.

Missionaries are certainly needed in Western Europe. Regular church attendance there has sunk to single digits — 7% for most Christian denominations in Britain, even lower in France and Germany. By comparison with this gloomy picture, North America still looks moderately devout. About 40% of Americans and 20% of Canadians say they go to church regularly — and probably at least half of them are telling the truth. If Europe is a post-Christian society, then North America is still a moderately observant one. But both exist in a world where Asia, Africa and Latin America are passionately devout. . . .

## A godless civilization\*

The Czech capital is cluttered with churches. From humble parish chapels to the Gothic grandeur of St. Vitus Cathedral, the wonderment of Christian faith seems to ooze out of the city's every pore. But the churches are mostly empty, and the only wonder to most Czechs is why anyone at all bothers to go. Czechs are among Europe's most fervently secular people. According to a European Union survey published last year, only 19% of Czechs said they believed in God; most of the rest proclaim themselves atheists. Only the former Soviet republic of Estonia had a lower percentage of believers.

Jan Kittrich, a 30-year-old Prague lawyer, is typical. He described himself as an atheist but quickly added that he had nothing against churches. "I love to visit them," he said. "But I see them as historical objects, not as religious places."

The Czechs are not alone. From Ireland to Italy, church attendance across Europe is down drastically, and apart from Western Europe's rapidly growing Muslim communities and

<sup>\*</sup> From Tom Hundley, "On holy ground, a hollow sound: Czechs' shunning of religion in part blamed on Soviets," Chicago Tribune, April 30, 2006.

the staunch piety of Poles in the east, religion as a moral force in public life continues to wane. By all accounts, British Prime Minister Tony Blair is a devout Christian. But when Blair recently told a television interviewer that his religious faith informed his worldview, he was lambasted from the left and right. The message for British politicians was clear: If you happen to have a religious urge, keep it in the closet.

Mark Lilla, a professor of social thought at the University of Chicago, has described present-day Europe as "the closest thing to a godless civilization the world has ever known." ...

#### Is God dead?\*

... In 1966, a TIME cover story pondered the fate of Christianity and asked, is god dead? The magazine wasn't the first to pose the question — theologians have lamented society's secularization for centuries — nor would it be the last. He's still not dead, but these days in Europe, He's not always in the same old places. So it's worth asking: Where has God — and Christian faith — gone?

The institutions of Christianity, of course, have long been in decline, but the consensus is that the pace has been quickening. "Parish life is essentially dead," admits a senior Vatican official. Church attendance has dwindled by more than 30% in Britain since 1980. Over the same period, the percentage of the population claiming membership in a religious denomination has dropped more than 20% in Belgium, 18% in the Netherlands and 16% in France. Christianity remains Europe's main religion, with about 550 million adherents. But the number of Europeans who identify as Catholic — by far the biggest denomination on the Continent — has fallen by more than a third since 1978.

At times, the church has been its own worst enemy—backing Franco's brutal regime in Spain (something it still

<sup>\*</sup> From Jeff Chu, "O Father Where Art Thou?," Time, July 11, 2003.

hasn't apologized for) and stonewalling the Irish pedophilia scandals of recent years. But even before these revelations, the church "was an oppressive force," says Willie Walsh, the Bishop of Killaloe, who went on a millennial pilgrimage of reconciliation in 1999. "It was judgmental and placed too much emphasis on a God who was very much to be feared."

What may be new, however, is that the Christian establishment now sees and accepts itself as a minority force — an underdog, where in centuries past it literally ruled Europe. "Churches have always gone through periods when their influence is greater and periods when it was less. Now we are down," says German historian Jobst Schöne, a bishop in the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church. "Christianity will be a minority. Nobody should close his eyes to that fact."

In all of Ireland, just one Jesuit priest — Tony O'Riordan from County Cork — will be ordained this year. At least he believes in God; last week, the Church of Denmark suspended a pastor after he told a newspaper that God doesn't exist. That man may want to consider a career change, but he's not alone in breaking with religious traditions. According to the Third Wave of the European Values Study, a report by Tilburg University in the Netherlands that will be released to the public in July, only in Ireland, Malta and Poland do more than half the people go to church weekly. More than half of those polled in France, Britain, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands said that religion is not important to them.

Governments are severing official ties to the faith that has been inextricably linked with European history since the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This week the European Union is debating a draft constitution that nods at the "spiritual impulse" in Europe's "heritage" but makes no mention of God or Christianity — despite the best lobbying efforts of Pope John Paul II. Most European countries no longer have state religions, and there's pressure to disestablish in Britain and Norway, two that still do. The crucifix has long since been taken down from public schoolhouse

walls; today's argument is about whether teachers — or students — should be allowed to wear the Muslim veil.\* That's a reminder that Europe has good reasons to make the Christian God a little harder to find. In a pluralist society that takes pains not to exclude any religion or culture — and now includes more than 37 million Muslims — the days of Christianity as the "official" religion should be over. . . .

Where popes and cardinals once usurped the authority of kings, and kings established churches to suit their own needs, today the trend is to weaken whatever mild church-state connections still exist. In 2000, Sweden disestablished its state church, eliminating most of the denomination's legal and fiscal advantages. Norway has convened a commission to draft an action plan for loosening ties by 2005. And Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury and leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion, has voiced support for the eventual disestablishment of the Church of England....

Many people may be rediscovering spirituality, but they're not necessarily returning to the church or sticking to its tenets. Call it à la carte Christianity. More and more, says Christian Welzel, a political scientist at the International University Bremen, "people tend to construe their own patchwork religion that takes elements from Buddhism, for instance, or aspects of Hinduism that they find interesting, to create their own belief system."

Such unorthodoxy worries some church leaders, but it satisfies the yearnings of millions of people who prefer to chart their own spiritual course, getting help and guidance along the way from websites or the new age shelves at the local bookstore. They may be the toughest crowd for the traditional church, which seems to acknowledge the need to adapt to modernity, but just isn't willing to bend that far. . . .

<sup>\*</sup> France passed a law banning Muslim schoolgirls from wearing a veil or scarf, arguing that that would run against the secular character of French education. Despite protests, the government held firm. (Eds.)

#### Is America Next?\*

... Something remarkable and newsworthy has taken place in Western Europe over the last two decades. Once the very cradle of Christian civilization, Europe has embraced a secular future, and the residual memory of the Christian tradition is fading fast.

... The statistics documenting European secularization are now impossible to ignore. Ireland, still one of the least secular nations in Western Europe, has seen church attendance fall by at least 25% over the last three decades. Ireland is predominantly Roman Catholic, of course, but the paper reports, "Not one priest will be ordained this year in Dublin." On the Protestant side, the picture is not much better. Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands, once the cradles of the Reformation, are now prime examples of Europe's secular shape.

Throughout the European continent, Islam is the only religion growing in the number of adherents. According to the Center for the Study on Global Christianity, at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in suburban Boston, the decline in Christian influence "is most evident in France, Sweden and the Netherlands, where church attendance is less than 10% in some areas." ... In Sweden, the government reports that 85% of Swedes are church members, yet only 11% of women and 7% of men attend church services.

The most documented evidence of Europe's secularization comes in moral terms. As *USA Today* reports, the number of marriages is dropping throughout much of Europe. "There is virtually no social stigma for unmarried parents," the paper explains. "More than half of the children in Sweden and Norway are born to unmarried mothers, according to the European Union." In other nations, the statistics are similar.

<sup>\*</sup> From Albert Mohler, "Christianity Recedes in Europe ... Is America Next?," at www.christianity.com. The author is a theologian and Baptist minister.

Interestingly, the paper reports that one of the "most striking consequences" of Christianity's decline in Europe has been fewer children. As Knox explains, "The birth rate throughout much of Western Europe has fallen so drastically that the population in many countries is shrinking...." As Ronald Inglehart argues, "The biggest single consequence of the declining role of the church is the huge decline in fertility rates." ...

In many ways, America seems to be following the European example, though several years behind. Yet the pace of moral transformation in the United States may indicate that America is fast catching up with the European model of secularization. All this should remind seriously-minded Christians to analyze survey data with caution. Even as the vast majority of Americans claim to be Christians, the indicators of social morality and commitment to marriage and children indicate that America may be moving closer to the European precedent.

#### European apostasy\*

To understand the crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe, visit the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Issy-Les-Moulineaux outside Paris. The vast 100-year-old structure, built on the ruins of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century chateau, contains vaulted ceilings, stained-glass windows and hundreds of rooms. Pope John Paul II visited here in 1980 on a trip in which he chastised the French for abandoning the church. But the seminary's corridors are dark, the individual living quarters largely empty. Only 52 seminarians are studying this year, a decrease of 50% from a decade ago. Many of them come from as far away as Vietnam and Rwanda. "We could welcome more than 200 seminarians if they wanted to come," said the Rev. Jean-Luc Védrine, the 45-year-old superior. "Today there are young people in France who have never seen a priest."

<sup>\*</sup> From Elaine Sciolino, "Europeans Fast Falling Away From Church," New York Times, April 19, 2005.

Indeed, in all of France last year, only 90 priests were ordained, compared with 566 in 1966. More and more throughout Europe, priests are being forced to cover several parishes.

... During his 26-year papacy, John Paul II used the force of his personality in dozens of trips around the Continent to try to bring back European Catholics who had fallen away. It was a disappointing exercise.

Among Catholics, only 10% in the Netherlands, 12% in France, 15% in Germany and Austria, 18% in Spain and 25% in Italy attend Mass weekly. Granted, historical, demographic and cultural differences mean that the reasons vary from country to country. But in terms of an overall sense of spirituality on the Continent, there is a troubling trend. Only 21% of Europeans say that religion is "very important" to them, according to the often-cited European Values Study, conducted in 1999 and 2000 and published two years ago. A similar survey in the United States by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life put the number at nearly 60%.

The trend away from regular participation has been so noticeable that it has even been given a name: European apostasy. "European Catholics are not against the Catholic Church," said Ulrich Ruh, editor of the Catholic monthly Herder-Korrespondenz, based in Freiburg, Germany. "They go to church at least once or twice a year and bring their children to be baptized and confirmed. Rather, they have made their own personal arrangements with the church and do not want to be disturbed. They do not want to be evangelized. That is why the pope failed to make the church more attractive."

Part of the problem is the church's emphasis on punishment and sin rather than on inclusion and community. On the trip to France in 1980, early in his tenure, for example, Pope John Paul referred to the country by its historic title and asked, "Eldest daughter of the church, what have you done with your baptism?" That approach, which some here dismiss as paternalistic, alienates many of Europe's Catholics, who insist that it is the church's leaders — not the faithful — who must

change. "They still think they have the truth and that their truth must be imposed on everyone," said Didier Vanhoutte, former president of the *Fédération des Reseaux du Parvis*, an umbrella organization of 41 Catholic reform movements across Europe. "They haven't accepted the limits of their power. They have to get closer to the people by accepting a certain degree of poverty and, certainly, humility."

More than their American counterparts, Europe's Catholics disregard the church's teachings on an array of moral and sexual issues, including abortion, embryonic stem cell research, in vitro fertilization, sex outside marriage and homosexuality. The Netherlands allows same-sex marriage and several other countries — including France, Denmark, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Finland — offer some sort of same-sex de facto marital contract. Some countries — including Spain, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Denmark — have liberalized euthanasia laws.

The trend away from organized Catholicism is sharpest among European youth. In Spain, a poll of university students by the BBVA Foundation in March indicated that of the institutions playing a prominent role in Spanish life, the Catholic Church inspired the least amount of confidence. Only 45% consider themselves Catholic, compared with 80% of Spain's population as a whole. Today, the poll concluded, most university students "disagree with the statement that, 'The teachings of the Catholic Church help us to live more morally.' " . . .

Certainly, secularism, particularly in the separation of church and state, is strictly enforced in many countries in Europe. In 2004, the campaign by some European governments, supported by the pope, to include a reference to Europe's Christian heritage in the draft European Union constitution failed. Later last year, Rocco Buttliglione, a former Italian minister, was rejected for a top post in the European Union for his opinions that homosexuality is a sin and that women would be better off at home. In 2002, the European Union adopted a report urging its members to ensure access to contracep-

tion, a move that Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family denounced as "a dark and sad moment for this great Europe."

There is growth in Christianity on the Continent, but it tends to be among immigrants from Asia, Africa and Latin America, who are often drawn to churches described as evangelical, Pentecostal or charismatic....

# Islamization of Europe?\*

... While Christianity is still very relevant in the United States, and is exploding in the developing world, Europe today has sunk below unbelief, and is now labeled "Christophobic" and "anti-religious." While an American might look at a church building and think nice thoughts, that's rarely the case with a European, especially here in France, where religion is more likely to be associated with oppression, irrelevance, or simply the past. ...

Among the clergy in the state churches, unbelief is extraordinarily high. Baylor Sociologist Rodney Stark said, "It's easy to have a negative religious experience going to church in Europe. The one place unbelief is rampant is in the churches." The study "Fragmented Faith?" found that in Britain, one out of five Anglican pastors does not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ. And only 60% believe in the virgin birth — that's a lower level of belief than among churchgoers. . . .

There have been reports recently that although church attendance in Europe is low, belief in God is actually very high, but belief in what sort of God? Judging from surveys, it's a new age faith with a large dose of moral relativism. . . . One writer described Europe today as a majority of Christian atheists and a minority of Muslim fanatics — an exaggeration. But there is a spiritual void on the continent that Islam waits to fill. . . .

<sup>\*</sup>From Dale Hurd, "Europe Forsakes Christianity for Islam?," a 2006 article from Christian Broadcasting Network (www.cbn.com).

## Why go to church?\*

... Last month, Pope Benedict XVI lamented the weakening of churches in Europe, Australia and the USA. "There's no longer evidence for a need of God, even less of Christ," he told Italian priests. "The so-called traditional churches look like they are dying." ... Though many Europeans say they consider themselves Christians, far fewer actually attend services. One need only see the overwhelming number of gray-haired heads in church pews to know attendance will keep falling if something doesn't change dramatically. Benedict, who visits Cologne, Germany, next week for World Youth Day, is expected to tell some 400,000 young people there that they are the future of the church. But the pope and other leaders of traditional churches admit that their struggle for souls in Western Europe is their greatest challenge. . . .

Among the most striking consequences of the decline of religion has been fewer children. The birth rate throughout much of Western Europe has fallen so drastically that the population in many countries is shrinking, indicating that women throughout Europe now routinely use artificial birth control, in defiance of the Roman Catholic Church's teachings.

. .

The waning influence of religion also has brought a change in attitudes and laws on issues such as divorce, abortion, gay marriage and stem cell research. ... The Roman Catholic Church still wields some power. In May, the Vatican helped defeat a referendum in Italy that would have made fertility treatments more accessible. The Vatican urged people not to vote. Because turnout was less than 50%, the results were invalid. Nevertheless, slightly more than a mile from the Vatican, at the Sant Anastasia church, there were just 28 worshipers at a recent Sunday Mass. The mostly gray-haired

<sup>\*</sup> From Noelle Knox, "Religion takes a back seat in Western Europe," USA Today (www.usatoday.com), 10 August 2005.

women sat in pews built to hold up to 400. "Now, it's only a wedding or maybe the funeral of someone important that can fill the whole church," says Giovanna Lutti, 79. . . .

It is not just the Catholic Church that has seen its numbers fall; some Protestant churches have been affected. Among the most striking examples is the Swedish Lutheran Church. For generations, "You didn't become a member when you were baptized. You became a member when you were born," says Carl Johan Lidén, a priest for the church in Stockholm. In 2000, the church was separated from the state as part of the country's secular trend. People now can write to their local parish telling the vicar they no longer wish to be members and opt not to pay taxes to the church, which range from 2% to 3% of their income. Although some 85% of Swedes are church members, only 11% of women and 7% of men go to church, the government says.

In Sweden, and throughout Scandinavia, the decline of the church also has been matched by a drop in the number of marriages. There is virtually no social stigma for unmarried parents. More than half of the children in Sweden and Norway are born to unmarried mothers, according to the European Union. In Denmark, it's 45%....

As Western Europeans have moved away from traditional worship, more people say they are "spiritual" rather than religious. Steve Hollinghurst, an Anglican priest, says, "It's very much what's appealing to people now — spirituality that works with my lifestyle. ... Faith and spirituality are now viewed as consumer products. And that's had an impact on the way people view institutional churches." ... Kenny, a Dublin student, says he's merely typical of his generation. "I'm very spiritual," he says. "I speak to an energy force I call God, and I get answers," he says. "If you can get a spiritual connection without going to church, why go to church?"

Christian writers who comment on the steep decline of Christianity in Europe often express a fear of its Islamization, citing Islam as the "fastest-growing religion in Europe." Although Islam has no doubt been gaining ground, as a result both of immigration and conversion among marginalized sections of society, in some countries it is Buddhism (and various forms of "Eastern wisdom," including yoga) or revived Pagan religions that attract most new adherent. The following excerpts paint a picture of this growth of alternative faiths.

#### Neopagans in the U.S.A.\*

Polling data from the 2001 ARIS study, described below, indicate that:

- 81% of American adults identify themselves with a specific religion :
- 76.5% (159 million) of Americans identify themselves as Christian. This is a major slide from 86.2% in 1990. Identification with Christianity has suffered a loss of 9.7 percentage points in 11 years — about 0.9 percentage points per year. This decline is identical to that observed in Canada between 1981 and 2001. If this trend continues, then by about the year 2042, non-Christians will outnumber the Christians in the U.S.
- 52% of Americans identified themselves as Protestant.
- 24.5% are Roman Catholic.
- 1.3% are Jewish.
- 0.5% are Muslim, followers of Islam.
- The fastest growing religion (in terms of percentage) is Wicca — a Neopagan religion that is sometimes referred to as Witchcraft. Numbers of adherents went from 8,000

<sup>\*</sup> From "Religious Identification in the U.S.," www.religioustolerance.org. The ARIS study referred to is the American Religious Identification Survey conducted by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, available at: www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research\_studies/aris.pdf.

in 1990 to 134,000 in 2001. Their numbers of adherents are doubling about every 30 months. Wiccans in Australia have a very similar growth pattern, from fewer than 2,000 in 1996 to 9,000 in 2001. In Canada, Wiccans and other Neopagans showed the greatest percentage growth of any faith group. They totaled 21,080 members in 1991, an increase of 281% when compared with 1990.\*

 14.1% do not follow any organized religion. This is an unusually rapid increase — almost a doubling — from only 8% in 1990. There are more Americans who say they are not affiliated with any organized religion than there are Episcopalians, Methodists, and Lutherans taken together.

A USA Today/Gallup Poll in January 2002 showed that almost half of American adults appear to be alienated from organized religion. If current trends continue, most adults will not call themselves religious within a few years. Results include:

- About 50% consider themselves religious (down from 54% in December 1999)
- About 33% consider themselves "spiritual but not religious" (up from 30%)
- About 10% regard themselves as neither spiritual or religious.

#### When God becomes Goddess\*\*

There is afoot in America today the search for a whole new

<sup>\*</sup> Wicca is a Neopagan movement that originated from a few twentieth-century occultists (notably the Englishman Gerald B. Gardner) and integrated a variety of occult practices, worship of a mother-goddess and of Nature, etc., from European traditions as well as from Asia. Wiccans often calls themselves "witches," but reject the Christian demonization of witchcraft as devil worship.

<sup>\*\*</sup> From a lecture by Dr. Peter Jones, "Pagan Revival in Christian America,"

spirituality. One book that I would suggest you read, if you are interested in this, is the book by Tony Schwartz, ... What Really Matters — Searching for Wisdom in America (New York, Bantam Books, 1995). He went around America interviewing the representatives of this new spirituality. In it he talks about the flowering of a more comprehensive approach to wisdom, uniting the best of the East and the West, and this, he says, represents a historic first. "Never before have we had access to so many technologies of transformation, so much knowledge about the full spectrum of human possibility. It is not just that there is wisdom to be found in America," - and get this, all you patriotic Americans — "but that these comprehensive approaches are emerging primarily in America." At the end of his book he makes an interesting declaration. Really the message is this: that there is a wisdom in America that will save the planet, and that American know-how, tied to the ancient wisdom of the East, will save us. He speaks about "an emerging American wisdom tradition," a new spirituality, a first, never before seen.

Richard Gregg, a Roman Catholic theologian, professor at Sacred Heart University, recently wrote a book called *When God Becomes Goddess* — *The Transformation of American Religion*. His thesis is this: "The traditional Western notion of deity may be destined not for obliteration, but rather for transformation. Perhaps God will simply not disappear, but will in some fashion become goddess." So we are in the presence, many now believe, of a new American wisdom tradition, a new spirituality uniting the techniques of the West and the wisdom of the East.

One particular way of explaining where this new spirituality has arisen — it isn't a full explanation — is the influence of

given at the University of California on May 7, 1998 (and reproduced at www.gracevalley.org). Dr. Jones, a Christian theologian and author of Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America, is actually critical of the rejection of the Christian god and the adoption of Pagan ones. (Eds.)

the sixties on American culture. It seems to me that we are living in the full flowering of the sixties revolution.\*... New Age mystics like Marilyn Ferguson and UCLA physicist Capra consider the sixties to be extremely important for a changing world view. Says Ferguson, "The values that had powered the movement of the sixties could not be institutionalized without a shift in cultural assumptions. As consciousness changes, the world changes."...

What was destroyed by this destructive generation? Nothing less, I believe, than the dominance of Western Christendom and civilization.... What was the impact of the sixties in terms of the destruction of the general Christian world- and life-view that was common in America to that date? I'd like to look at the sixties in its destructive element via three notions: the rejection of authority, the rejection of biblical sexual norms and morals, and the rejection of Christian spirituality. ... The most powerful aspect of that search for spirituality went against Christian spirituality, because the radicals turned East. Woodstock was a spiritual happening, the drug trip a search for the Garden of Eden, and the radicals went East to find a new, though very old, form of spirituality. ... The sixties, then, represent not simply the rejection of authority, or a liberation, if you like, of the sexual morals of the Judeo-Christian worldview, but also this searching for a new spirituality. The Beatles went East and the gurus came West. This is what has been happening religiously and spiritually in America in the last generation; in our time, the East and the West have been drawn together. There are very powerful forces that project the West to the East. What do I mean by the East? I mean, in particular, Eastern spirituality Hinduism, Buddhism, and various Chinese religions.

<sup>\*</sup> This revolution saw the spread of the "New Age" movement or culture, which was largely inspired by the Hindu-Buddhist worldview. (Eds.)

## The return of Paganism\*

Like European politicians who continue to block any mention of Christianity in the draft of the continent's Constitution, public officials around the globe increasingly are adopting measures that favor a return to pre-Christian paganism.

Denmark has announced it will allow a group that worships Thor, Odin and other Norse gods to conduct legally-valid marriages, the *Associated Press* reported November 5. "It would be wrong if the indigenous religion of this country wasn't recognized," said Tove Fergo, the government Minister for Ecclesiastic Affairs and a Lutheran priest. The 240-member Forn Sidr sought recognition in 1999, said its president, Tissel Jacobsen. About 1,000 people worship the ancient gods in Denmark, Jacobsen said.

Across the ocean, a U.S. federal judge in the state of Virginia ruled in favor of a Wiccan who was barred from saying a prayer to open a Chesterfield County board meeting. U.S. District Court Judge Dennis Dohnal said the board discriminated against Cyndi Simpson when it prohibited her from joining a list of clergy who deliver the invocations, the *Associated Press* reported November 14. Wiccans consider themselves witches, pagans or neo-pagans, and say their religion is based on respect for the earth, nature and the cycle of the seasons, according to the *Associated Press*. The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia and the Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed the lawsuit on behalf of Simpson after she was turned down by the board.

Wiccans are also active in Canada, where recently they celebrated the winter solstice, the *Vancouver Sun* reported Dec. 22. Heather Botting, a pagan chaplain at the University of Victoria, told the newspaper that the solstice, marking the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, is a

<sup>\*</sup> From the unsigned article "The Return of Paganism: As Christianity Declines, Superstitions Gain Force," 7 February 2004 (Zenit.org).

sacred day. An ex-Jehovah's Witness, Botting was appointed five years ago by university authorities. She is also authorized to perform marriages. At the university interfaith chapel, members of the 30,000-strong student body were able to mark the solstice with dances that paid to reverence to stag antlers as symbols of the cycle of life. Revelers dipped a ceremonial knife into a cast-iron cauldron of wine, to symbolize the unity of male and female divinity.

In the Greater Victoria area, population 280,000, more than 1,000 people officially told Canadian census-takers they were pagans, the *Vancouver Sun* said. Paganism is Canada's fastest-growing religion, according to Statistics Canada. There are 21,080 declared pagans in Canada. The census figures underestimate Wicca's spread, claims Inar Hansen, vice president of the university's 150-member Thorn and Oak Student Pagan Club. Hansen maintains that tens of thousands of residents on Canada's West Coast practice paganism. . . .

According to recent figures, fewer than 3% of Londoners are now regular churchgoers. At the same time, non-Christian practices such as Kabbalah, Buddhism, Hinduism and crystal healing are flourishing, the *Financial Times* noted. "For many westerners, particularly women, it has become the norm to master Buddhist chanting in a meditation class, learn about ancient Hindu philosophies during a yoga class, light an (aromatherapy) candle and say a prayer (to a nameless God) back at home," commented the article. A further sign of the triumph of alternative spiritualities came with the recent appointment of a spirituality editor by the British women's magazine Cosmopolitan.

While paganism gains legal protection, Christianity continues to be singled out for exclusion. Last Christmas season, for example, the British Red Cross banned the mention of Jesus from its shops, the *Sun* newspaper reported November 11. Also barred were Christmas cards with nativity scenes and Advent calendars showing Mary and Joseph and the three wise men. Meanwhile, the Christmas card sent out by

the United Kingdom's culture secretary, Tessa Jowell, featured Hindu dancers and drawings of mosques, the Telegraph reported December 7. What the card failed to show was anything about Jesus or Christmas. And, in Australia, the Victorian state minister for transport, Peter Batchelor, opted for a Christmas card with an Aboriginal dream scene, without any Christian reference, the *Age* reported December 19. Scotland's Parliament also abolished any reference to Christianity in its cards. . . .

Re-Christianizing an increasingly pagan society will not be easy.

#### The rise of Buddhism in the West\*

... All forms of Buddhism are also found throughout the world in nontraditionally Buddhist countries. There are two major groups involved: Asian immigrants and non-Asian practitioners. Asian immigrants, particularly in the United States and Australia, have many ethnic temples. This is also the case on a smaller scale in Canada, Brazil, Peru and several Western European countries particularly France. The main emphasis is on devotional practice and providing a community center to help the immigrant communities maintain their individual cultural and national identities. Buddhist "Dharma centers" of all traditions are now found in more than eighty countries around the world on every continent. These are mostly frequented by non-Asians and emphasize meditation, study and the practice of rituals. The vast proportions of these centers are from the Tibetan, Zen and Theravada traditions. The teachers at these centers include both Westerners as well as ethnic Buddhists from Asia. The largest number are found in the United States, France and Germany. Serious students often visit Asia for deeper training. Furthermore, there are Buddhist study programs in numerous universities

<sup>\*</sup> Culled from various sources; the first extract is from "The Current Situation of Buddhism in the World" (hwww.berzinarchives.com). (Eds.)

throughout the world and an ever-growing dialogue and exchange of ideas between Buddhism and other religions, science, psychology and medicine. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has played a most significant role in this respect.

- Census figures published in 1996 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics mentioned 199,812 Buddhists in Australia. This was an increase of nearly 60,000 from the 139,847 Buddhists recorded in the 1991 census. In 1996, Buddhists now make up 1.1% of the Australian population. In 1991, the number of Muslims exceeded the number of Buddhists by 7,660 but this gap decreased to 1,073 in just five years. Between 1986 and 1991, Australia's Buddhist population increased by a massive 74%. This is a larger percentage growth than any other religion in Australia.
- Buddhism is ranked among the fastest growing religions in many Western European countries. In France, Buddhism is considered the fourth largest faith — after Christianity, Islam and Judaism — with an estimated 600,000 practitioners.

#### The spread of yoga

Numerous articles have documented the considerable spread of various yoga and meditation techniques in the Western world; 15 to 20% of Americans, for instance, practise one of them. Any U.S. or European city will have several yoga centres, and smaller towns often too; yoga associations and federations abound; hundreds of books on yoga have been written by Westerners, and hundreds of magazines are in circulation. Yoga is now a recognized technique in fields as diverse as management and sports — and religion. A recent article of the Washington Post\* read:

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Churches, Synagogues Mingle Yoga With Beliefs," Washington Post, January 1, 2005.



Cover of Time, 23 April 2001 & 4 August 2003

The latest incarnation of yoga, a discipline that began 5,000 years ago as a set of spiritual exercises with origins in Hinduism, is for devout Christians and Jews. In a small but growing practice, churches and synagogues are offering yoga as a tool for connecting with God. ... Once associated with the New Age crowd, yoga has stretched into suburban strip malls and county recreation centers. Yoga cruises, yoga health food and yoga clubs exist. Yoga classes have been designed for pregnant women, mothers and babies, and even people with pets. So-called "Christian yoga" is drawing yoga veterans who say they feel more comfortable in a Christian setting, as well as many people who say they would not otherwise have attempted the activity. Practitioners usually perform the same series of physical postures and breathing techniques as in traditional yoga, a routine designed to calm the body and mind. But they also might incorporate prayers and hymns and rename the poses.

Not all Christians are happy with "Christian yoga," however. A few years ago, the English vicar of St. Michael's Church (parish of Melksham in Wiltshire) banned yoga classes from his church hall "because of yoga's association with Hinduism"; a spokesman for Britain's Anglican Church supported the right of clergymen to take a stand against any practices which "do not square with Christian teachings," adding, "Yoga is used as a kind of generic term for exercise and stretching, but there are many different types of yoga. Some have a more spiritual basis as handed down from Eastern religions. It's reasonably understandable that someone can say so if they don't want something with a spiritual basis taught in their church hall." Yoga enthusiasts were angered by such statements, which they saw as narrow-minded. The secretary of U.K.'s National Council of Hindu Temples commented, "I don't think there would be a problem if we opened our temple premises to our Christian brothers. We Hindus are broadminded and it is surprising for us to hear a Christian vicar say he will ban yoga classes." In any case, yoga has remained "one of the fastest growing extra-curricular activities in the United Kingdom with a following among all sections of society."

Similarly, in 2003, the Vatican reasserted its stance against Eastern practices such as yoga, which it had condemned in 1989, warning that yoga "can degenerate into a cult of the body" — a crude misrepresentation for what is essentially a dogma-free spiritual discipline which works at all levels of the being.

Whatever the stance of dogmatic religions, in the West yoga is there to stay, and to grow. Along with Buddhism, it is India's gift to a world groping for a spiritual guidance its religions failed to provide.

80 03

Is it not curious that, whilst under the terrific onset of modern scientific research, all the old forts of Western dogmatic religions are crumbling into dust; whilst the sledge-hammer blows of modern science are pulverizing the porcelain mass of systems whose foundation is either in faith or in belief or in the majority of votes of church synods; whilst Western theology is at its wit's end to accommodate itself to the ever-rising tide of aggressive modern thought; whilst in all other sacred books the texts have been stretched to their utmost tension under the ever-increasing pressure of modern thought, and the majority of them are broken and have been stored away in lumber rooms; whilst the vast majority of thoughtful Western humanity have broken asunder all their ties with the church and are drifting about in a sea of unrest, the religions which have drunk the water of life at that fountain of light, the Vedas — Hinduism and Buddhism — alone are reviving?

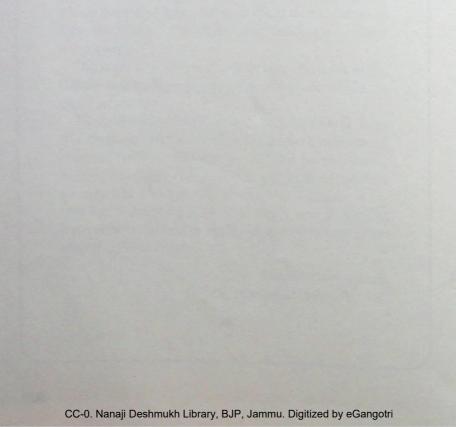
The restless Western atheist or agnostic finds in the Gita or in the Dhammapada the only place where his soul can anchor.

The tables have been turned, and the Hindu, who saw through tears of despair his ancient homestead covered with incendiary fire, ignited by unfriendly hands, now sees, when the searchlight of modern thought has dispersed the smoke, that his home is the one that is standing in all its strength, and all the rest have either vanished or are building their houses anew after the Hindu plan.

Swami Vivekananda Complete Works (1990), IV: 505

CS

# Epilogue



Just as histories of colonialism have been largely written by the colonial powers, in effect erasing the testimony of the colonized, most histories of Christianity — and in India, all of them — have adopted a Christian standpoint as a matter of course. In this volume, we sought to reverse the perspective and assert the right of the countless victims of Christianity to be remembered, and, when still possible, to be heard.

At this stage, sincere Christians usually object that if their religion does have a dark past, that past also has a brighter side: think of the spread of Christian values, or selfless service offered at great personal sacrifice in the farthest corners of the earth; think of the countless kind-hearted Christians who have been embodiments of compassion, charity or service; think of the vast amounts of literature, painting, sculpture or music inspired by Christian themes; think, finally, of the great heights of spirituality reached by Christian mystics. Have such achievements not benefited humanity at large? And do not other religions have their own darker sides, too? Is it fair, therefore, to single out Christianity for a one-sided treatment? Is this not as bad a misportrayal as the one Hindus complain of when it comes to their religion?

These questions contain partial truths. Partial, because the spread of Christian values, in the few cases where those values were practised at all, was always at the cost of earlier cultures which were illegitimately assumed to be inferior; because kind-hearted people have existed in every culture, probably more so outside Christendom; because every religion gave rise to literature and art, which conquering Christianity often destroyed; because Christian mystics have been far fewer than those of other religions (especially India's native religions), and were often regarded with much suspicion, sometimes persecuted, by church authorities; and because whatever dark spots there may be in non-Abrahamic religions, none has ever treated dissenters or adherents of other belief systems remotely as cruelly as Christianity did.

There lies Christianity's central and persistent problem: it has been all too eager to practise its god's declaration that "every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood" (Genesis 8:21) — a dismal stamp of sin and evil put on humanity. Again, no non-Abrahamic religion or culture so demeaned the human being.

Nevertheless, if a Christian chooses to believe in a doctrine of original sin and redemption, of damnation and salvation, of eternal hell or paradise, the Hindu, for instance, will respect such a choice. If a Christian claims to find spiritual fulfilment in his religion, the Hindu will feel happy for him, even if the

reverse is rarely true.

But the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Native American, African or Australian, the Neopagan also have a right to ask why the spread of Christianity has meant so much misery and dehumanization to non-Christians; why the "good news" and "glad tidings" had to manifest through physical and cultural genocides, leaving trails of broken families and shattered cultures; why Christian colonizers stole land from non-Christian cultures when they were supposed to follow a commandment enjoining them, "You shall not steal"; why criminals and abusers among them were more often protected than prosecuted; why apologies have been so few and vague, and concrete reparations even rarer. In this era of human rights, they are entitled to ask what will be done to restore the rights of those who threatened no other culture, but whose land and traditions were preyed upon.

And what will be done to protect the rights of those still preyed upon today. Those questions, and many more, remain largely unanswered; our sincere Christian must address them. For Christianity's dark side is regrettably not confined to the past; a companion volume will focus on proselytism — a euphemism for predation — again adopting the perspective of the prey rather than the prevailing one of the predator.

# EXPRESSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY WITH A FOCUS ON INDIA

Though claiming to act from and for "the love of Jesus," Christianity has brought suffering and destruction to individuals, communities and cultures in almost every region of the world. This collection of papers by Indian and foreign scholars, which spans two millennia and includes Europe, America, Asia and Australia, does not focus on Christianity's teachings or theology, but on its actual *expressions* in the world.

Just as histories of colonialism have been largely written by the colonial powers, in effect erasing the testimony of the colonized, most histories of Christianity — and in India, all of them — have adopted a Christian standpoint as a matter of course. This book endeavours to reverse the perspective and asserts the right of the countless victims of Christianity to be remembered, and, when still possible, to be heard.

The book's 45 essays do not demonize Christianity; rather, they bear witness in memory of the millions it demonized and martyred for no fault of theirs. And they hold a lesson for the surviving vulnerable cultures and communities in India and elsewhere.

80 0R